

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF THE COMPOSING BEHAVIORS  
OF FIVE YOUNG BILINGUAL CHILDREN

BY

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This dissertation is dedicated  
to my support system--my family  
Jerry, Mom, Ed, Robin, Jenny and Gavin

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BY

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The purpose of this study was to investigate in detail the composing behaviors and perceptions of writing of five young bilingual children ages six through ten years. The researcher acted as a participant-observer in the context of one English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. The study focused on two guiding questions:

1. What are the behaviors which accompany the composing processes of young bilingual children?  
What do children do while they write (i.e., talking, drawing, reading)?
2. How do Spanish-speaking young children view the writing process?

A qualitative research methodology was used to collect and analyze data. Weekly observations were made during two ESL classes for 140 hours during the last 4 months of

school. These observations focused on the writing-related behaviors of subjects and teachers in this classroom. Written field notes, formal and informal interview data, a researcher's journal, and writing samples were collected.

Data analysis was cyclical in nature and revealed twelve composing behaviors: confirmation questions, invented spellings, copying, body language, prewriting, concealing writing, writing play, talk while writing, asking questions, statements about writing, reading back, and taking breaks. Of the twelve behaviors, three appeared to be specific for these bilingual children: confirmation questions, reading back, and concealing writing.

The following general conclusions were drawn from the findings: a) bilingual young children employed many of the same composing behaviors as younger monolingual writers; b) all children used most of the composing behaviors cited although all composing behaviors were not used by all of the subjects; c) teacher practice and teacher views of writing appeared to influence children's composing behaviors as well as their views of writing; d) children in this study held two distinct views of writing, which may in part be explained by age, teacher practices, developmental writing levels and the interaction within the setting where the writing occurred; e) when children wrote personal messages, the frequency of writing and the length of the message increased.

This study described the composing behaviors and the views of writing of five young bilingual children. It suggested that teacher practice and teacher sensitivity to children's perceptions of writing are crucial variables in fostering literacy.

## CHAPTER I BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

Literacy for young bilingual children is an issue of great importance in recent research in bilingual education. This study focuses on Hispanics, who according to recent census information, comprise 6.4 percent of the population of the United States. Of the 15.9 million Hispanics reported to reside in the United States, 20 percent were under the age of 10 years and 21 percent were between the ages of 10 and 19 years of age (Bureau of Census, 1983). Because a need exists to provide appropriate instruction for the increasing numbers of bilingual children in our school systems, information of a descriptive nature is necessary. The great diversity of opinion which exists about the best instructional methodologies for bilingual children is, at least in part, a result of the paucity of research directed at describing and understanding these children and their learning. A preliminary step toward instructional planning must be the careful description of young bilingual children, their writings, and perceptions of literacy. This study has been planned in order to document bilingual children's composing

behaviors during writing in a classroom situation and their perceptions of writing.

#### Statement of the Problem

In studies of young writers, researchers have described their writing products (Clay, 1977) and, in a few studies, have given information about young children while they write (Childers, 1981; Dyson, 1982; Taylor, 1983). For example, we know that some young children take frequent breaks while writing, write for an audience, and converse copiously while writing (Childers, 1981). Are these composing behaviors the same for bilingual children? Research on composing behaviors with young bilingual children is in its infancy. A descriptive approach to the problem is essential to gather information about these procedures.

Young bilingual children enter school with well developed notions of literacy (Goodman, 1980, 1982). Many factors in classroom life and their lives in general affect their views or perceptions about literacy. As they interact with their environment these views may change, be added to or clarified. This process of making sense in terms of the language is influenced by the social context of and the interactions between children and teachers. In order to design effective instructional practice for young bilingual children, consideration of these views and the

components of writing is essential. This study investigated the composing behaviors of five young bilingual children and their views of writing. The study focused on two guiding questions:

1. What are the behaviors that accompany the composing processes of young bilingual children? What do children do while they write (i.e., talking, drawing, reading)?
2. How do Spanish-speaking young children view the writing process?

#### Design of the Study

The researcher employed ethnographic methods to study this problem. Ethnography provides a means through which the researcher can attempt to gain the perspective of the subject (i.e., see the problem through the child's eyes) in order to understand the problem being studied (Spradley, 1980).

Geertz describes ethnography as a process of interpreting the ecological web of significance in people's lives. From the textbook perspective, Geertz sees using ethnography as ". . . establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, . . . keeping a diary . . ." (1973, p. 6), but argues that while these activities may be methods used by the ethnographer, they do not necessarily produce an ethnography. The primary

characteristic which distinguishes ethnography from other research methods is the requirement that the researcher utilize the participants' understanding in interpreting the results (Geertz, 1973).

This study focused on the dynamic context of everyday classroom life where verbal and social interactions were viewed as key elements in the teaching and learning process. In this study, the individual learner was described with his/her unique characteristics and his/her interaction with others in this classroom, including the teachers. Dynamic changes were occurring in these children as they made the transition from the Spanish to the English language. It was important then to consider the individuals in detail as they began to write. Their perceptions as well as teachers' perceptions were seen as crucial in facilitating the writing process. The social interactions and research perspective provided the scaffolding for this project. This perspective considers the perceptions of the learners and the teachers in constant interaction and change. The classroom then was viewed as a social context in which the natural give and take of participants affected the learning outcomes.

Using an ethnographic approach, the researcher learned from subjects via description of what occurred in the day-to-day environment of the subjects. The researcher/ethnographer collected field notes, conducted interviews, took

photographs, and collected samples of writings for later analysis in order to describe in detail the classroom studied. These methods were used in this study to document the daily classroom writing episodes, to describe what children thought about writing and what they did while writing. Through the analysis of the field note records and the other instruments employed, patterns emerged which created a "picture" of these bilingual children's composing behaviors and their perceptions of writing.

The researcher selected one English as a Second Language Classroom (ESL) where bilingual children wrote daily in small groups. The subjects chosen for the study were five Spanish-speaking students. Detailed description of their composing behaviors as well as teacher practices was made. This information was gathered in 47 three-hour observation sessions. Data were transcribed from written field notes and then typed onto protocols such as the example found in appendix E. Informal interviews with the principal, the teachers, and the students were completed as part of the field note record. Audiotape cassettes were made of formal interviews with the teachers and each subject in the study. The researcher kept a diary including the following information about each session: data, people observed, time, statement of activity, researcher questions, researcher hunches, and reflections.

### Significance of the Study

This study addressed the need for research in the composing behaviors of young bilingual children. Only a few studies in recent years (Edelsky, 1983; Ferreiro, 1978; Hudelson, 1983) have explained the writing processes of bilingual children. Typically, research studies with bilingual children have centered on program evaluations and quantitative studies to measure program effects. Unfortunately, this practice focused on final products rather than specific observations to determine the components of the composing process.

From qualitative studies which focus on few children and describe bilingual writers in detail can come relevant and useful information for theory building. This study demonstrated that these five young bilingual children have many characteristics similar to young monolingual writers. Other composing behaviors as described in this study are not found in the research literature. The findings of this study also document the importance of teacher practice in the composing behaviors of young bilingual writers and, further, how the teacher's view of writing may influence the child's perceptions of writing. These findings complement the research findings (Ferreiro, 1978; Graves, 1975) which support a view of writing that is a dynamic and interactive process in which the child must construct his writing system. The environment and teachers

can be supportive and children will develop their own meaningful writing systems. In other words, the context and the interaction are crucial to the development of writing for young bilingual children. In this study, with the supportive context described, the children begin to construct messages that hold meaning for them. This careful examination of context and interaction provides insights into the composing processes of young bilingual children as well as their perceptions or view of writing.

Researchers as well as practitioners can benefit from this study. The methodology chosen, as well as the research perspective, is not commonly used in conducting writing research. By the products of this methodology, the processes and perceptions involved can be described and new questions and variables for further study in bilingual writing can be illuminated as well. Further, young bilingual writers are examined in their regular program with their teachers, and the external influences and how these influences impact the children are described. The views of writing held by these children add a new dimension to the existing studies of bilingual writers. A more complete picture of the composing processes and these children's perceptions of writing can be derived from the conclusions drawn in this study.

Practitioners can benefit from the detailed look at an ESL classroom, the teachers, and students who enter these

classrooms. In the findings which link teacher practice to student behaviors and perceptions of writing, the importance of sensitive teachers and facilitative teaching practice for young bilingual writers is emphasized. The similarities and differences between monolinguals and bilinguals is clearly described in this study and the information can be valuable to teachers who are assisting children in their own classrooms to acquire a new language--oral or written. The importance of a child's unique characteristics and perceptions is highlighted in this study. Teachers can find practical value in this type of research because they see similar children in their classrooms and can see the importance of being sensitive to the behaviors and the processes children employ while learning to write.

#### Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they are used in this study.

Bilingual young children--children between the ages of six and ten years who are fluent in oral and/or written Spanish and are learning English as a second language.

Composing behavior--Any action observed in conjunction with drawing, writing, and/or dictating which occurs during the observation session or is

described by teachers as a result of a writing activity.

ESL Classroom--A classroom where children who have limited English language skills are placed for 45 minutes daily to learn English as their second language.

Hispanic--Any child whose primary language is Spanish according to parent and/or teacher report and who has been observed to converse in Spanish with peers, teacher, or researcher.

Perceptions of writing--Views of writing which are actively constructed by the individuals in contexts where they react and interact during writing.

#### Limitations of the Study

The objective of this study was to describe the composing processes and perceptions of writing of five bilingual young children and their perceptions of writing. It may be, however, that the findings can be applied only to situations in similar ESL classrooms with classroom teachers who hold the same meaning-centered approach toward developing writers. The researcher selected the children in this study because of their limited knowledge of the English language, recency of arrival to the United States, and their availability for observation. All subjects in this study came from families

where one or both parents were students at a university. All of the subjects were middle to upper middle socioeconomic-status families. Their composing behaviors may not typify all young bilingual children's composing behaviors.

#### Scope of the Study

The proposed study was conducted in one ESL classroom in a public school over a four-month period. The students were Spanish speaking and varied in age from 6 to 10 years. The primary research questions provided the focus for the study; new questions, however, were formulated as data collection in the form of field notes, interviews, and audiotaped interviews were analyzed. Two guiding questions directed the early stages of research: (1) What behaviors accompany the composing processes of young bilingual children? and (2) How do Spanish-speaking young children view the writing?

The following questions emerged from the data as recurrent phenomena, widespread in the observational record. Answers to the following questions provide greater depth for understanding the central questions:

1. What do teachers do while children compose? What are the messages they send to children about writing?

2. What are the types of writing generated by students in an ESL classroom? By the teachers?
3. What is the role of oral language in the composing process? How are the English and Spanish languages used in the composing process?

Although this study can provide insights into the teaching and learning of writing, the composing behaviors and children's perceptions of writing may not be generalized to dissimilar populations.

#### Summary

This study describes the composing behaviors and perceptions of writing of five young bilingual children in an ESL Classroom. The study was designed to add information to existing knowledge about young bilingual children and how they compose. The findings from this study can provide educators of young bilingual children with a better understanding of what behaviors occur during composing, how these children view this writing, and perhaps what facilitates writing for bilingual young children.

## CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction

The purpose of this review was to survey the literature on the early childhood writing of bilingual children. In order to do this, the crucial role that language learning plays in early writing has been reviewed. Many studies have documented the importance of home and school environments on the development of oral language, bilingually (Askins, 1975; Christian, 1977; Zierer, 1977). Factors such as timing of second language introduction, parental involvement, and natural home environments have fostered the development of oral language. Language-rich environments can be linked to the development of writing. Environments rich in the materials for writing and drawing and exposure to adults who write have crucial impact on young writers (Bissex, 1980a; Calkins, 1980; Durkin, 1966; Taylor, 1983).

From examination of some early intervention programs for young bilingual children, current educational practice for language learning and important features of these programs can be discerned. The final part of this review focuses on writing-development studies which clarify

(1) writing development of monolingual children; (2) links between oral language and writing; and (3) the writing of bilingual children.

#### Language Learning of Bilingual Children at Home

Some Spanish-speaking children come to school speaking only their native language. Others have acquired, to varying degrees, a second language. Three case studies described the dual language acquisition of children before age three. Each stressed the value of dual language acquisition in the home environment.

Zierer (1977) reported the experiences of a child who learned and mastered two languages by the age of four years. The child was specifically exposed to only one language until the age of three, when he asked for Spanish translation as the surrounding community was Spanish speaking. Within months, the boy had mastered both languages with the same degree of phonetic, morphologic, and syntactic levels. Evidence of coordinate bilingualism was reported when a malignant brain lesion was found and surgically removed, as the child's languages were both affected simultaneously. Findings indicate that coordinate bilingualism ideally develops when one language is spoken until approximately age three and then the second language is added at this age.

Another case study (Christian, 1977) related the experiences of the author as a father of two children, who not only learned two languages before kindergarten, but read in both English and Spanish at the conclusion of their kindergarten year. It is the contention of this researcher that these children at the age of two years showed an interest in learning to read, and teaching them in their native language was "infinitely more simple" than attempting to teach skills in the language they would be using in school.

In a third case study, written as a master's thesis, Past (1975) has described her two-year-old daughter as having mastered three languages by the age of four years. Past began with one language at birth, added a second ( $L_2$ ) at 18 months when her daughter became interested in picture books by simple vocabulary naming. When her daughter then was reading simple books in Spanish and English (age four), Past exposed her to a third language, music. Emphasis was placed on interest of the child in a natural home environment.

These studies support a natural learning environment for dual language learning. A further implication for bilingual educators is the importance of familial involvement which could be extended into early childhood classrooms via parents as volunteers, grandparents visiting, or other siblings as tutors.

Language Learning of Bilingual Children at School

The outstanding intellectual achievement of any child is his acquisition of language (Thonis, 1971). When a child acquires two languages, it is a remarkable triumph in human learning. The facilitation of learning a second language logically begins at the youngest age possible if the language is to be learned outside the home. Educators have responded to this need by developing a variety of early childhood intervention programs in an attempt to get a "head start" on second-language learning before formal public school.

The term, early intervention programs, describes federal programs designed for preschool children. These programs attempt to prepare Spanish-speaking children for entering public schools with an ability to communicate and function in two languages. Although the studies to be cited were developed independently, the general curricular goals focused on instruction in both native language ( $L_1$ ) and the second language ( $L_2$ ), and skill development in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The findings suggested that early intervention programs for bilingual competence can be successful in the areas of increased oral language and improvement in self-concept (Askins, 1975; Greene, 1975; Mayher, 1973; UMOS Child Center Project, 1976). A third area of success reported in some preschool intervention programs was parental

involvement and the improvement of home environments for language learning.

The emphasis on parental involvement and home learning was observed in the Spanish Dance School Project, California, 1972. Children in this preschool spent approximately two hours a day in a home-learning environment and had a home tutor. Parents were actively involved in learning activities and served as adult models for their children. The instruction was in Spanish and English and a pretest-posttest, control-group design was used. The findings suggest (1) significant oral language gains in Spanish by the experimental group and (2) greater gains in oral English development than the control group.

Research findings concerning some early intervention strategies for language learning suggest instruction can be effective in promoting oral language in both  $L_1$  and  $L_2$  of experimental groups surveyed (Askins, 1975). Another important aspect of bilingual instruction, as noted in several studies, was a gain in the self-concept ratings of participating youngsters (Askins, 1975; Greene, 1975; Mayher, 1973). Research pertaining to parental involvement in these bilingual programs indicates that parents have a high degree of participation, evidenced by their involvement in tutoring and participation in learning activities. It should be noted, because they are few in number and contain only small samples, that these

conclusions warrant further research to insure generalizability. Finally, all of the studies have been cross-sectional in design, offering no clear indication of what happens to individual children within these programs. Ethnographic studies dealing with limited samples might shed light upon how and why these programs are effective for some individual children.

#### Early Intervention Programs

Schools accommodate the various language abilities of bilingual children with various program models in which several variables are in effect. How much time the child spends daily, the type of teacher, the language of instruction, and the subjects covered all vary in different settings. Some of the more popular intervention program models are summarized in table 1.

The program studied in this research project is an ESL classroom of a transitional model in which children received help in L<sub>1</sub> while acquiring English (L<sub>2</sub>). The goal of this program is for children to make the transition to speaking English with no Spanish instruction being offered. Other models mentioned have a different focus, one of maintenance or enrichment. For example, Spanish for Spanish Speakers (SSP) and Spanish as a Second Language (SSL) programs could be classified as maintenance programs

Table 1. Intervention Program Models

Models	Focus	Types	Curriculum/Language Use
Transitional	focuses on making the transition from L <sub>1</sub> to L <sub>2</sub> phasing out to no instruction in L <sub>1</sub>	ESL/transitional compensatory education classes assimilation cultural transfer	L <sub>2</sub> in language arts and subject matter (as in ESL and bilingual classes) L <sub>1</sub> and L <sub>2</sub> with phasing out of L <sub>1</sub> -ESL emphasis gradual transition to all English curriculum
Maintenance	focuses on keeping L <sub>1</sub> while teaching L <sub>2</sub> dual language approach full bilingualism	concurrent use of two languages bilingual classes SSP SSL	develops equally functional bilingual skills in children gradual and partial transition to English curriculum SSP is continued emphasis on both languages
Enrichment	focuses on acquiring a second language	emphasis on second language	second language used in early years L <sub>2</sub> first then L <sub>1</sub> later emphasis on L <sub>2</sub>

**Key:** ESL = English as a second language; SSP = Spanish for Spanish speaking children;  
 SSL = Spanish as a second language; L<sub>1</sub> = first language; L<sub>2</sub> = second language.  
**(Source:** Adapted from Trueba & Barnett-Mizrahi, 1979)

because they focus on maintaining the Spanish language of students while they are learning English in other settings. The Concurrent Translation Model and Alternate Days Model would fit under the maintenance model since the emphasis is on dual language acquisition and maintenance. The enrichment models emphasize the second language early in their curriculums. These models, referred to as immersion programs, place a premium on acquiring the second language first and in middle elementary years, gradually add L<sub>1</sub> until a balance between L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub> is reached in late middle school.

The environment in which language learning occurs has received much attention in research studies recently (Hamayan & Tucker, 1980; Legarretta, 1977). The role of language input for second-language learning focuses on the setting and teacher language behavior as important components in the rate of learner production.

Legarretta (1977) studied the effects of language choice by teacher in five bilingual classrooms. Using the Flander's Multiple Coding System, she coded frequency of Spanish or English language used by both teachers and aides in these classrooms. Two models of bilingual classrooms were observed, the Concurrent Translation Model and the Alternate Days Model. Findings demonstrated that (1) bilingual teachers use English over 70 percent of total class time; (2) students in these classes model the

language choice of teachers; (3) 80 to 85 percent of the talk in classrooms is teacher talk if choral responses are removed; and (4) that English is the primary language of choice warming or accepting the child's contributions and for correcting. Legarretta found that the Alternate Days Model, in contrast, generated an equal distribution of Spanish and English by teachers and children overall. An expansion of this study would amplify the finding that teacher's language choice is positively correlated with student usage. If preschool programs are designed to nurture L<sub>1</sub> before public school entry (Thonis, 1971), this finding would have major implications for language-of-choice time allocation.

Another study concerning language input by Hamayan and Tucker (1980) compared the speech of six teachers. Three of the teachers were in immersion schools and three in more traditional settings. Immersion programs use L<sub>2</sub> in early years and gradually include L<sub>1</sub> until a 50/50 split occurs at late middle school. Data collection techniques similar to the previously mentioned study were used from which less specific conclusions were reached. Hamayan and Tucker indicate that the frequency of occurrence of certain syntactic structures in teacher's speech is related to the learner production of these structures (i.e., modeling). In addition, teacher's behavior in L<sub>2</sub> classrooms is characterized by frequent use of strategies such as

questioning and commanding regardless of whether the child was a second-language learner or native speaker. Finally, the teacher's reactions to student errors varied as a function of linguistic group and grade level. Teachers in both groups tended to correct more of younger second language learners' errors than younger native speakers. A serious limitation in this study, however, was the unknown nature and amount of L<sub>2</sub> usage as it relates to language production in learners.

At the early childhood level, the important issue appears to be language competency rather than early school achievement. The young child must feel accepted in the school environment and feel his/her language is equal and acceptable to others (Thonis, 1971). The rationale for supporting this language competency in a child's native language is recently supported by research indicating that bilinguals may be superior to monolinguals in their conceptualization of the notion of symbols (Feldman & Shen, 1971; Oren, 1981). It is postulated that because bilinguals learn two distinct codes at an early age, their flexibility at differentiating objects with corresponding symbols is increased.

Lambert, Tucker and d'Anglejan (1973), in a field experiment in Montreal, Canada, reported significant advantages for bilinguals on a series of intelligence and creativity measures by the end of the second year of a

bilingual education program in which children were immersed in French ( $L_1$ ), and this methodology was shown to be just as effective in promoting English proficiency as the comparison group, which received instruction in English ( $L_2$ ).

Carey and Cummins (1980) reported that grade-five children from French-speaking home backgrounds in the Edmonton Catholic School System bilingual program (80% French, 20% English) from kindergarten through twelfth grade performed at a level in English skills equivalent to Anglophone children of the same IQ in either bilingual or the comparison group which was matched on socioeconomic status and IQ. Another carefully controlled longitudinal classroom study was carried out with Navajo students at Rock Point (Rosier & Holm, 1980) in which all literacy skills are taught in Navajo,  $L_1$ . The study demonstrated that by grades five and six, students were performing at the United States national norm in English reading. Prior to instruction in the bilingual program, students were two years below the norm in English reading skills.

A final study, documenting the preferred languages of instruction for linguistic minorities, was carried out in Mexico and compared two school systems where the national language is Spanish. Modiano (1974) in this study determined that with the mestizo population she studied, the bilingual approach beginning in the Indian vernacular

for early instruction and then adding the national language facilitated reading comprehension in the national language.

An environment rich in language experiences in both languages is conducive for optimal growth of young bilingual children. From the studies cited, the support and use of the child's native language clearly facilitate a young child's transition to literacy in a second language. It is clear that bilingual instruction can be implemented at an early age and continued for cognitive growth in both L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub>. The remainder of this review focuses on the linkage between language and symbolic development in young children.

#### The Writing Development of Children

A surge of interest in the study of young writers has been seen in the past decade (Calkins, 1983; Chomsky, 1971; Graves, 1981, 1982; Harste et al., 1981). These studies have demonstrated that young children learn to write naturally when their writings are accepted and supported and when they are immersed in language-rich environments. Studies of bilingual children have documented the crucial importance of home and school environments in language learning (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982). Research on oral language development has demonstrated the link between oral language and written language. Just as to attain oral language, children must be immersed in language-rich

environments, researchers are finding that children must be immersed in meaningful written language in order to write (Clay, 1975; Ferreiro, 1978; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982). A review of these studies documents what is known about the development of writing for monolingual children.

#### Writing Development of Monolingual Children

The developmental process of writing begins before children are able to write. They begin by scribbling and marking on paper to convey messages that have meaning for them (DeFord, 1980). These scribbles and random marks lead to more recognizable signs and symbols which are intended to make sense to others (Clay, 1975; Ferreiro, 1978). The sequence is developmental, individually refined and constructed, finally emerging as standard print.

#### Stages of Developments in Writing

Oral language plays a large role in the development of writing. Children use the sounds of language to aid them in their first invented words or what Read (1971) has termed invented spellings. Children write down their messages using a code that they have constructed from their perceptions of sound/symbol correspondences. Other researchers have described the developmental nature of writing which may be viewed as sequential; however, this has not been standardized for all children. Individual

children described may skip stages or may not follow each sequential step in the development of their writing.

Early reading studies have documented a sequence of writing which included scribbling/drawing, copying objects and letters, asking questions about spellings, and then being able to read (Durkin, 1966). In a later study, Chomsky (1971) confirmed Durkin's research and suggested that children may be taught to read by writing first. Chomsky's argument calls for the reversal of standard read-then-write policy to expose children to a more concrete instructional practice in preparation for the more abstract symbolization--reading. She suggested that writing provided a more active and child-centered thought process which involves the child in concepts important to him/her.

In New Zealand, Clay (1975) looked further into writing development and focused on the young child's awareness of written language, which she calls awareness of print. Clay's research focused on the writing behaviors of five-year-old children in a setting where copying and tracing behavior has been encouraged by teachers. She generated thirteen principles in the writing of young children:

1. Sign concept: A sign carries a message.
2. Message concept: A child realizes that a spoken message can be written down.
3. Copying principle: Some letters, words and groups of words must be copied to establish printing behavior.
4. Flexibility principle: Children will create a variety of new symbols when left to

- experiment with letter forms--by repositioning or decorating standard forms.
5. Inventory principle: Children will arrange, order, or list what they know.
  6. Recurring principle: Children have the tendency to repeat an action.
  7. Generating principle: Children extend their repertoire by knowing some rules for combining or arranging elements.
  8. Directional principles: Children experiment with left to right and top to bottom progression.
  9. Reversing directional pattern: Children use mirror writing when selecting a starting point toward the right-hand edge of the page.
  10. Contrastive principle: Children create contrasts between shapes, meanings, sounds, and word patterns.
  11. Space concept: Children use space to show the end of one word and the beginning of another.
  12. Page and book arrangements: Children tend to ignore directional principles when they cannot fit a word or sentence on a line or page.
  13. Abbreviation principle: Children use abbreviations to stand for words that could be expanded.

(Clay, 1975: pp. 63-65)

In her research, Clay accounted for variability in children by stating that children do not learn about writing at one level in a strict sequence. She postulated the following sequence for writing which is not hierarchical:

1. understanding that print talks
2. forming letters
3. building up memories of common words they can construct out of letters
4. using those words to write messages
5. increasing the number and range of sentences used
6. becoming flexible in the use of sentences
7. disciplining the expression of ideas with the spelling and punctuation of English.

(Clay, 1975: pp. 11-12)

Clay's research has not addressed the transition from

drawing to writing nor has it included a naturalistic look at the development of writing since her subjects were drawn from public school classrooms where writing instruction was in progress.

The writing research of Ferreiro (1978) described a developmental sequence for young Spanish-speaking children in Mexico. The following developmental stages were postulated:

1. Only nouns are written.
2. The entire sentence is written in a single segment of the text; the child proposes other sentences compatible with the first one.
3. It is impossible to find a division in the utterance that could be made to correspond with the segments of the text.
4. Nouns are written independently but not the verb.

Everything is written except the articles.  
Everything is written, including the articles.  
(Ferreiro, 1978: pp. 30-35)

Ferreiro's research complemented the findings of the other studies on stages of writing development in that the writings of children appeared to move from the global concept to the more differentiated concepts of print as children move from mastery of letters or words to attempts to communicate in complete thoughts and messages.

DeFord (1980) studied the spontaneous writing of children two to seven years old and found that their writing was characterized by five concepts: (1) linearity, (2) uniformity, (3) flow, (4) directionality, and (5) rhythm. DeFord discussed these concepts as rules and concluded that, for the 50 children she observed,

recognizable stages of writing moved from global concepts about print to the more specific. Her stages were

1. Scribbling
2. Differentiation between drawing and writing
3. Concepts of linearity, uniformity, inner complexity, symmetry, placement, left-to-right motion, and top-to-bottom directionality
4. Development of letters and letter-like shapes
5. Combination of letters possibly with spaces, indicating understanding of units (words, letters, sentences), but may not show letter sound correspondence
6. Writing known isolated words--developing letter/sound correspondence
7. Writing simple sentence with invented spellings
8. Combining two or more sentences to express complete thoughts
9. Control of punctuation--periods capitalization, use of upper- and lower-case letters
10. Form of discourse--stories, information, materials, letters, etc.

(DeFord, 1980: pp. 162)

The above research studies confirmed that written language appears to be learned in much the same way as oral language. A study done in 1980 by Forrester illustrated this conclusion. She noted many similarities between the stages of oral language and written language development. Forrester (1980) presented the comparison of oral and written language development given in table 2.

Forrester also tied this notion of developmental sequence to spelling development.

#### Invented Spelling

The development of writing and the various stages young children appear to pass through is closely related to

Table 2. Comparison of Developmental Levels of Oral and Written Language

Oral Language	Written Language
Babbling	Scribbling-pretend writing
One-word sentences	One-letter spelling
Two- and three-word sentences	Two- and three-word sentences
Self-programming of simple rules (not necessarily conforming to adult rules)	Self-programming of simple rules (not necessarily conforming to adult rules)
Overgeneralization of acquired rules	Overgeneralization of acquired rules and patterns (phonetic spellings, transfer of spelling patterns from known words)
Adoption of more precise speech	Adoption of more accurate spelling

(Source: Derived from Forrester, 1980 )

the research which has studied developing spelling strategies. The work of Read (1971) is similar in the spelling area as he has documented the spellings of very young children and determined that a complex system was used in developing spelling rules. Other researchers studying invented spellings have confirmed the research of Read and found that although the actual spellings may vary children's spellings at various ages had observable patterns (Bissex, 1981; Forrester, 1980; Gentry, 1978, 1981).

In Read's studies with preschool children, he found that children rarely repeated the exact invented spelling. These children were not memorizing but were learning ". . . a complex, but generally systematic phonology system" (Read, 1971: p. 1). The spellings he observed were motivated by a phonetic system under construction by individual children which was consistent enough to be certain that random spelling or adult model was not the model. His studies led to some conclusions about strategies that preschool children use for spelling. These strategies demonstrated that their spellings are not random and are linked to their perceptions of the sound/symbol correspondence between letters and sounds. Speech sounds were characterized by preschool children in the following ways:

1. Children have to represent forty some phonemes of English with twenty-six letter names.
2. Vowels are a distinct category and are represented by the single letters A, E, I, O, and U (sixteen vowel sounds are represented by five symbols).
3. Long vowels are represented by matching letter name to sound (BOT-boat, FEL-feel, KAM-came, TIGR-tiger).
4. Short vowels are represented by the letter name that sounds closest (BAD-bed, LAFFT-left, FES-fish).
5. Nasals strongly tend to be omitted from spelling when they immediately precede consonants (WOT-won't, PLAT-plant, AGRE-angry).
6. Letters are sometimes used according to their names (double u-w--SPWN-spoon, KOSTWM-costume).
7. Young children tend to spell both s and z as s.
8. Children from the beginning spell plurals with an s.
9. TR is represented with CH (CHRIBLS-troubles, CHRIE-try, CHROK-truck).
10. DR is represented by J (JRGIN-dragon, JRIV-drive, JRAN-drain).
11. EG and IG are used for ing endings (FEHEG-fishing, SOWEMEG-swimming, PLAYIG-playing, COMIG-coming).
12. R, L, M, and N between two consonants or at the end of a word after a consonant are perceived as a separate syllable (TIGR-tiger, AFTR-after, WAGN-wagon, CANDL-candle, SOGR-sugar, LITL-little, OVR-over, OPN-open).
13. Past tense endings are represented by d or t as a syllable (STARTID-started, WALKD-walked, HALPT-helped, MARED-married).

(Adapted from Read, 1971)

Read's research illuminated the concept of phonological competence and its relationship to the writings of preschoolers. With invented spellings, these children were able to communicate in writing long before they had formal reading and writing in school programs. They could

communicate independently and the main concern is the message not the "correct" spelling.

In his research, Gentry (1978, 1981) documented the developmental nature of spelling again and postulated five stages of spelling which moved from simple to complex. He observed what he termed "deviant" spellings as the first stage, which included random letter order, scribbling, and symbols for numbers or words. The prephonetic stage contained spellers who used one, two, or three letters for words which could be phonetic but rarely contained vowels. The phonetic-stage spellers demonstrated an almost exact correspondence between letters and sounds and were fluent writers who used phonetic spellings. A transitional stage emerged when children became familiar with common spellings and applied standard spellings to many words in their writings. The final stage described in Gentry's research was the correct-spelling stage which completed the developmental process, at which time children usually used standard spelling and were in the last half of second grade (Gentry, 1981).

Bissex's case study of her son, Paul, supported the developmental spelling theories of Gentry (1981) and Read (1971). Bissex used a case study approach to document the five years that she kept a record of her son's writings. Her work complemented previous research, as the stages of spelling moved from beginning letterlike forms which

represented a message, but not individual sounds or words, to the use of consonants, and then consonants and vowels as messages grew in length. In her case study, Bissex documented the individual characteristics of her son and how these appeared to affect his spelling and communications.

The research writings of early spelling behaviors have dealt with observational studies of middle or upper socio-economic status homes or schools. Only one of the studies mentioned (Hudelson, 1984) has looked at the invented spellings of bilingual children. The research to date has stated clearly that the ability to spell is a highly complex and active intellectual activity and not mere memorization. Further studies with differing socioeconomic status populations and bilingual writers will offer a more complete theory for the development of writing in young children.

#### Composing Behaviors

Research studies of young writers have begun to answer questions dealing with the developmental nature of learning to write and learning to spell. Studies have changed their focus from written products to the process of writing in home environments (Bissex, 1980a) and classroom environments (Calkins, 1983; Dyson, 1982; Graves, 1973). In researching the process of writing some studies have emerged to describe this process in terms of composing behaviors (Childers, 1981; Green, 1984; Vukelich & Golden, 1981). What are the composing behaviors that young

children employ during writing? This question when answered will reveal much for practitioners and researchers about the writing processes of young children.

Graves and Giacobbe (1982) discussed a research study which included data collected over a three year period with first graders. The researchers framed a six month period during the third year to ask children specific questions about their composing processes. Ten of the twenty three children in this classroom were interviewed before and after writing, transcripts were made of the interviews, and writing products photocopied to demonstrate the relationship between concepts of writing and how the writings changed over the course of the study. This research study concluded that as children developed as writers 1) oral rehearsal before writing diminished, 2) new options for how to proceed with writings increased, 3) individual composing sessions lasted longer and could span days, and 4) a move from general concepts of writing to more detailed and specific concepts about the writing process was described.

Following Graves and Giacobbe's observational research, Calkins (1983) found that when the context of classroom writing allowed for verbal sharing of writing constructive responses from peers helped children grow as writers. Teachers' practice influenced this sharing which took several forms: whole class meetings with several

children sharing their writing, sharing which focused on a specific aspect of writing, sharing about the composing process, and sharing which involved giving writing to friends or a class library.

Vukelich and Golden (1982) collected writing samples from 34 four-year olds and 39 five-year olds on two different days in October, January and April. The researchers asked small groups of children to a writing center gave them writing books and pencils, and asked them to write anything they wished to write. The researcher then asked each child individually to "tell me what you wrote." The writings were categorized and analyzed and the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Interpretation of children's writings can be achieved better when viewed in the context of the children's oral language.
  2. Writing appears to begin before the child can produce written words which can approximate the correct alphabet models which can be understood by adults.
  3. Children do not write the same way every time: with a response to a single writing task, children may produce a variety of products.
  4. Unlike oral language, there appears to be no fixed sequence that all children pass through in the acquisition of written communication.
- (Vukelich & Golden, 1982: pp. 12-14)

These conclusions demonstrated the value of describing the composing process with learners in the classroom setting. Another study which used a laboratory setting has been mentioned earlier in this review, and it provided researchers with the composing behaviors of three children

aged three to five years (Childers, 1981). A final example of composing processes research is a study done as a doctoral dissertation study in a university laboratory kindergarten (Green, 1984). This study investigated the impact of a composing curriculum on children's concepts about print, writing fluency, and writing achievement. Green used 74 kindergarten children drawn from four classrooms. She planned a writing curriculum, complete with parent workshops and home involvement in the composing sessions, which were to occur in the two treatment groups three times a week. The two treatment groups were found to be significantly higher on the Concepts About Print test, writing fluency, and the first posttest of writing achievement. The effects of a composing curriculum at home and at school which supports naturally developing writing and spelling strategies within a verbal and social context are demonstrated by this research.

Research on the composing behaviors and the composing processes has described some of the behaviors that some children in certain groups employ while writing. More studies to document these behaviors and understand the composing process further are needed, specifically for children of different language groups.

Oral Language and Writing

A survey of the literature related to young children's writing processes reveals the link between oral language and writing. Oral language is often a key element of the writing process (Bissell, 1980b; Childers, 1981; Dyson, 1981; Hoffman & McCully, 1984). The studies cited examined the writing processes of several young children using qualitative observational methods. In a longitudinal study, Graves (1981a) and associates found that oral language almost always accompanied writing. The subjects for this research were 16 first-through-third graders who were observed during the writing process while in regular classrooms. The researchers made video tapes, collected writing samples, conducted interviews, and implemented writing interventions. The type of "talk" surrounding the writing was classified as

1. sounding to probe for sound/symbol relationship;
2. sounding to break off a phonetic unit from a word;
3. rereading the composition to reorient conversation with friends;
4. procedural talk;
5. advanced statement of text;
6. conversation before and after composing.

From Graves' analysis, it is clear that oral language plays as much a role in the writing process as the written product.

In another study (Childers, 1981), the composing behaviors of three children aged three to five years were studied using video taped sessions. The researcher suggested a writing topic at each of the 16 sessions. The researcher functioned as a participant-observer in these composing sessions which were in a laboratory setting. Conclusions revealed that oral language surrounded the writing process and four types of exchanges were classified: questions, answers/responses, sharing/telling, and taking breaks. The size of the sample, the laboratory setting, and researcher bias limit the generalizability of this study.

In a 1981 study, Dyson studied kindergarten writers, using ethnographic methodology. The research spanned a six-month period and dealt with the relationship of oral language to writing. Dyson added much to our understanding of the composing process because as a participant-observer, she saw and heard what goes on with young children during their composing-writing. Dyson's research describes the most common writings of kindergarten children: names of family and friends, texts relevant to their interests, and the young child's use of talk to interpret, narrate, or as the writing stimulus. Writing, then, serves the child in organizing the world by the application of labels to represent meaning for the child. Dyson's research demonstrated this process was surrounded with oral language

and that oral language is used for varying purposes. A longitudinal design and a larger more cross-sectional sample would add to the generalizability of results for all kindergartners.

Hoffman and McCully (1984) studied oral language and its effect on written production in two situations--the home and the classroom. They postulated that young children discover very early that as the situation (or context) varies so must the language vary according to the context. This theory about varying speech messages according to the participants is seen also with the composing processes and written products of young children. The natural development of oral language and writing strategies is actualized only when the learning environment supports these processes. In their studies, Hoffman and McCully reported their findings that young children's messages varied according to the directing or controlling language of the parent or teacher in the writing events they observed. When the parents directed the writing process, children "were told what, when, and how to write" (Hoffman & McCully, 1984: p. 43). If the same children wrote with an adult with different expectations, whose model of written language valued the child's construction of his/her own message, then the message produced tended to be more personal and meaningful for the child. In other words, when oral language and

expectations varied, written messages were influenced by these differences. In this study, the writing process and product were shown to be highly influenced by teacher strategies which supported the child's attempts to communicate with his own written language.

The studies presented indicate that oral language and interaction with peers characterizes the composing process of young monolingual children. No study to date has investigated the composing behaviors of young bilingual children in a similar fashion. Since oral language appears to play a vital role in the composing process, future studies of young writers need to be in a context which emphasizes social and verbal interactions.

#### The Writing of Bilingual Children

Research in writing with young bilingual children is in its infancy. The rationale for such research appears to be the link between thought and language which is represented by symbols or writing as young children begin to scribble with meaning. Writing is seen as a particular way of transcribing language. The Goodmans (1981) regard writing, with children, as the natural expansion of human language development. Their studies related writing to the graphic expression of meaning which evolves naturally from a child's native language. Goodman (1982) studied preschoolers' awareness and response to print, using a

small observational study of monolingual and bilingual children. She found that (1) preschoolers (four- and five-year olds) are aware that print has a message; (2) older children made more print-related responses; and (3) that all subjects (no matter the age) had a better understanding of writing than of reading. Goodman (1982) reiterates that for both reading and writing instruction with young children, the critical elements are meaning and purpose.

Hudelson (1983) studied the writing development of four native Spanish speakers. The original purpose of her study was to document writing development over a period of months as these native Spanish speakers became literate in English, through collection of field notes from their classrooms, teacher interviews, informal conversations, audiotaped writing sessions, and collection of reading and writing samples. The study focused on case studies of two children whose writings in class followed the form of what was being taught directly. The study describes their writing sessions with the researcher, which produced writing samples (mainly pictorial) early in the year. The composing activity was surrounded by talk and highly tied to messages as the school year progressed. The younger child, a second grader, used invented spellings when asked to write in English and used unconventional segmentation of phrases. For both children, the school environment and daily routine influenced what they thought writing was,

copying words and sentences correctly (early in the year). In the observation sessions with the researcher, the children's writing evolved and revealed developing second-language abilities: rereading, taking risks, experimenting with new writing, making additions to a piece, utilizing translations, and making use of environmental print. The sample size and student characteristics call for the expansion of this type of research study to provide more concrete generalizations.

In a study of young bilingual writers, Edelsky (1983) clarified the second-language writing characteristics of 26 young children of migrant farm workers. This descriptive study complemented the findings of others (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Hudelson, 1984), that performance in writing is highly influenced by contextual features of classrooms (school environment, teacher beliefs, materials provided, topic, etc.). In this study, all writings for a one-week period of each of the subjects were collected four times during one school year (giving a sample of 524 pieces of writing). Other data included teacher and aides interviews, day long classroom observations, test scores, school records, notes on parent organization meetings and demographic data on the district. Findings described writing through various modes of analysis that moved from unconventional segmentation and invented punctuations

toward conventionality through real/use rather than practice or directed training.

Second-language learners, as is true with monolinguals, move over time (through grade levels) toward conventional spellings and word segmentation based on the language of instruction and from interaction with print. A strength of this study is that it captured the child's perspective by not having the researcher impose writing tasks per session but provided a look at writings collected over time to ascertain the process of writing development for each subject. A second strength is the large data bank which was analyzed as many pieces of writing per child were collected. Limitations include the choice of only one site and of student socioeconomic status and small sample size from which to generalize results.

Ferreiro and Teberosky, in their book Literacy Before Schooling (1982), discuss writing with the bilingual as a constructive process in which a child is actually constructing knowledge. They hypothesize that writing is a product of active construction and restructuring of knowledge. Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) have proposed an experimental design for studies which is an individual interview to attempt to build information about how young bilingual children think and write.

Ferreiro's study (1978) began with the premise that children (bilinguals and monolinguals) have constructed

much knowledge about writing before they begin formal instruction and that to understand the writing system, the child must engage in an active construction process as opposed to a passive instructional sequence being imposed on the child. This study delineated socioeconomic status and separated the 68 subjects into two socioeconomic groups: upper middle class and working class families of four-, five- and six-year olds. As described, the individual interviews were performed prior to entry into their first school settings. Findings indicate that young children have difficulty with separations between words and, until the age of six years, refuse any separations in text. Segmentation of text does occur early as each subject tried to establish some form of correspondence between graphic segments and their own analysis of the sentence presented to them during the individual interviews. Ferreiro's findings indicated that the written text is related to spoken language, and a developmental sequence exists which recognizes first nouns (names) in print, and then verbs, and finally articles. A replication of this study within the second-language learning population may provide important data for educators planning writing curricula. A limitation of her study was the verbal presentation of the data by subjects and the lack of written samples which may substantiate the verbalizations of the subjects.

Many more studies are needed in bilingual settings to describe our knowledge about the composing behaviors of young bilingual writers, the writings they produce and their views of writing. A crucial factor in the development of writers from the most recent studies adds the teacher practices as an important variable in the study of bilingual writing.

### Summary

Few descriptive studies have defined the writing behaviors of young bilingual children. To date, there is a lack of information about the bilingual child's writing behaviors and children's perceptions of writing. Edelsky (1983) and Hudelson (1983, 1984) have begun a description of the writings of bilingual children. To understand writing behavior and the views of writing held by young bilingual writers, in depth observational studies are needed to further these beginning understandings. No study has described the composing behaviors of young bilingual children. Research has postulated the links between oral language and the development of written discourse and spelling strategies for monolinguals. Are these same findings applicable for bilinguals? Many questions remain unanswered for bilinguals. Are the composing behaviors for bilinguals the same as monolinguals? Or are there specific composing behaviors for bilingual children? Context, which

included classroom environment and teacher practices, was addressed in four studies (Dyson, 1983; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Hoffman & McCully, 1984; Hudelson, 1981) two of which included bilingual children. What is the role of social context and teacher practice in bilingual settings with regard to the composing process? What other factors influence the composing process of bilingual writers?

The purpose of the present study was to address some of the unanswered questions in this area of research. The following broad questions served to guide the investigation:

1. What behaviors accompany the composing processes of young bilingual children?
2. What is the role of oral languages in the composing process?
3. What is the teacher's role during writing with bilingual children?
4. How do young bilingual children view the writing process?

In the following chapters, methodology, findings and implications of the study are discussed. In chapter III, the methodology and setting for the study is described. In chapters IV and V, the subjects and the findings are presented. The conclusions and implications are found in chapter VI.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods for data collection and analysis using qualitative research methodology. The section begins with a statement of the problem and the research perspective. The selection of classroom, subjects, and data-collection methods follows, with definitions of the instruments used in recording the data collected. The final segment describes how the data were analyzed.

This study investigated the composing behaviors and their meaning for five young Spanish-speaking bilingual children. These children attended an ESL classroom in a public school in a southeastern city. The researcher chose ethnographic methods because the composing behaviors and perceptions about writing must be discovered based on in-depth observations of the subjects, their environment, and their statements about their writings.

### Research Perspective

A descriptive methodology was selected in order to increase available data and generate research questions in an area where few studies exist. This research was

conducted within the particular setting where bilingual children have opportunities to write. The researcher as a participant-observer was the main tool for research as she collected descriptive data regarding the writings and interactions of young bilingual children. The guiding questions of the study dealt with the writing processes of children; therefore, a methodology was needed which emphasized process and not product. Finally, the question of perceptions of writing or children's views of writing required a methodology sensitive to gaining insights and understandings about the individuals in a group. It can be clearly seen why qualitative methods matched the problem addressed in this study. The features which typify qualitative research are outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) as follows: (1) Research is conducted within the particular setting under study; (2) The researcher is the main research instrument; (3) Data are descriptive; (4) The focus is on ongoing processes rather than products; (5) Data are analyzed inductively; and (6) The researcher is concerned with understanding the perspectives of the people under study. The qualitative, naturalistic approach would provide the in-depth description lacking in the research literature on young bilingual writers. According to Wilcox qualitative research is defined as "a naturalistic, observational, descriptive contextual, open ended, and in-depth approach to doing research" (1982: p. 462). This

approach was necessary in this study as a beginning point to describe the composing behaviors of these five bilingual young children.

The researcher used symbolic interactionism as her theoretical perspective for studying the writing and views of writing of these children. This theoretical framework purports that written language development--and development in general--is accounted for by the interaction of the active, thinking child with his/her genetic makeup and the nature of the environment (Genishi & Dyson, 1984).

Writing, then, is not a set of inherent skills that can be taught in a package, but a product of the interactions of individuals in various contexts. To gain understanding of the composing behaviors of children, the researcher must closely examine the social interactions which occur while writing is in progress. Interactionist theory implies that the context of development matters. This focus on context may be termed sociolinguistic because in viewing language--written or oral--both linguistic and social abilities are viewed in the classroom context.

The present study addressed the need for studying the process of composing for children and studying this process in a naturally occurring classroom for bilinguals--the ESL classroom. Cook-Gumperz (1981) in the field of sociolinguistics has emphasized the study of interactive processes in the school context. In her words:

We must study children in occasions where they are not experimental puppets, responding to adult-defined and adult-organized situations, but must see them operating naturally as social beings in the everyday activity of communicating. (Cook-Gumperz, 1981: p. 49)

This study investigated the day to day composing behaviors by studying children in their typical classroom from an interactionist perspective.

The social interactionist perspective is grounded in symbolic interactionist theory as described by Blumer (1969). In this theory, the actors in any socially interactive situation through their interaction assign meaning to people, objects, and situations (Blumer, 1969; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Meaning is constructed as the individuals interact in a given situation. These processes of interacting and constructing meaning through written communication were the subject of the current study. Specifically, the children in this ESL classroom were the participants of interest and their composing behaviors and emergent views of writing which evolved were the focus of interest.

This investigation spanned a three-month period during which the researcher visited the classroom three times a week for 1 to 3 hour intervals. The researcher had established a degree of rapport in the preceding semester by frequent visits to the classroom and conferences with the teachers to clarify the goals of the study. Pilot work was also done in collecting some writing samples from

possible subjects while formulating the parameters of the study.

In order to investigate and understand the writings of these young children and their perspectives about writing, qualitative methods were employed. A detailed description of the setting, the subjects, the interaction, as well as the writing products, was collected. The researcher functioned as a participant-observer in collecting this descriptive account. Although some specific questions served as a focus, the research perspective dictated a flexible format which allowed for the discovery of the composing behaviors and the perceptions of what writing meant to these children.

#### School Selection

The bilingual children in this particular county were bussed to two schools which house the bilingual education classes and the ESL classes. One school was chosen because more time at one location would allow for greater depth of descriptive data. Since the study dealt only with Spanish-speaking children, the school with larger numbers of Spanish speakers was chosen to insure an adequate number of children who could be selected according to the criteria established.

#### Class Selection

The public school had four classroom settings where bilingual children spent portions of their day. Three of

the bilingual classrooms had a skills focus with a very specific curriculum (i.e., spelling, mathematics, reading). The ESL classroom was selected because the curricular focus was on language-arts-related activities. An emphasis on communication was observed in pilot work in both oral and written language. At this particular school, three instructional settings were available for the research: the regular classroom, the bilingual classroom or the ESL classroom. The criteria for classroom selection were as follows: a classroom (1) where children had opportunities to write on their own and where writing was not viewed as penmanship or copying a teacher model, (2) which would contain largely Spanish-speaking students, (3) where time was allotted for verbal interaction, (4) with a teacher who was comfortable having an observer present on a daily basis, and (5) that represented a typical educational approach to bilingual students. The researcher observed in regular classrooms, bilingual classrooms, and the ESL classroom, during a pilot study done earlier in the school year. In the regular classroom, most written work was copied or dealt with directed lessons, dittoed pages, or workbook pages. The bilingual classrooms were structured to include instruction in reading and reading workbooks, spelling, social studies, and mathematics. Texts from the regular classroom were used (usually at lower instructional levels) and the children were guided through this material

in English and Spanish. Writing occurred only as a consequence of an assignment or practice drill. In the ESL classroom, the following criteria for selection were met: a high proportion of Spanish speakers, abundant verbal interaction, and easy access for observation. Writing was a natural consequence of daily lessons. Although initially most of the writing was done by the teachers, the "groundwork" was present for spontaneous writing by the children. In order to define the writing policy of the ESL classroom, the researcher visited this class for a two week period in the fall of 1983, and observed and inventoried the writing, writing products and writing-related events that occurred in the classroom. Based on these observations, the researcher selected this classroom as having the greatest potential for children who would begin writing during the course of the school year and would be given opportunities to write on their own in a social interaction setting.

#### Subject Selection

In this ESL program, 30 children who were Spanish speakers were observed for the initial 2 weeks of the study. Of this group, five were selected who met the criteria established: (1) the child was making the transition from speaking Spanish to speaking English and (2) the child spent at least 2 hours a day in a bilingual setting but not more than 4 hours a day in these special

classes. This study focused on emergent writers and their views of writing. The kindergarteners observed were not yet writing and were, therefore, not selected. The older children in grades four and five who were well established writers, therefore, failed to meet the criteria for selection. A more in-depth description of the subjects will be presented in chapter IV.

### The Setting

#### Entry to the Site

In this classroom, there were two teachers--a full-time head teacher and a 3/4-time teacher. These teachers shared equal numbers of students who came to ESL class in grade level groups (e.g., the kindergarteners at 8:30 a.m.; the first graders at 9:15 a.m., etc.). Each group consisted of five to seven children. Because the head teacher spoke Spanish, she taught most of the Spanish-speaking children; however, once children became fluent in English they were assigned to either teacher. The teachers often combined their groups when an activity was appropriate for a larger group so the children were accustomed to working with either teacher or both teachers. In this study, the researcher made it a policy to include both teachers in interviews, formal and informal, although the bulk of observations focused on the head teacher who worked with most of the Spanish-speaking students.

Once the classroom was selected, the researcher met with both teachers to discuss the study and plan a schedule of observations which would begin in the spring. A statement of the goals of the research project and sample letters of consent for parents (in Spanish and English) were shared with both teachers (see appendix B and C). The specifics of observation were not discussed in order to avoid influencing teacher behavior. The discussion was aimed at what the researcher would do in the classroom (see appendix B). In an attempt to clarify the role of researcher, the researcher explained that she would be taking notes and trying to get verbatim statements of children. The possibility of some audio and video taped sessions was discussed. The teachers suggested that school personnel would be helpful and related that they used the video tape machine in several of their instructional units. The teachers were assured that they would have full access to the product of the research and that their anonymity as well as the childrens' would be protected. Both teachers enthusiastically welcomed the researcher. They assured the researcher that she could visit the classroom at anytime, scheduled or unscheduled. On the same day, the head teacher, Mrs. Summer, introduced the researcher to the principal whom she had told about the proposed study. The researcher spoke with the principal in his office and asked his informal permission to conduct the

study in his school. The principal stated that he had had many such requests for research studies and that he disagreed with the demands some researchers made on teachers. The principal indicated, however, that since his teachers were willing to participate he would approve the project and hoped that the results would be shared with the teachers. The principal also stated that final approval must come from the district office before the study could begin.

Following the winter holidays, the official paperwork was filed with the school district central office and a description of the proposed study and letters of consent were submitted to the University of Florida's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. By the end of January, the project was approved by the director of research for the county schools and by the university committee. Written parental consent was obtained from the parents of each subject as well as the teachers (appendix D).

The researcher then met with the teachers and arranged an observation schedule even though she had already been granted observations at any time. The researcher began with four 45-minute periods which contained Spanish speaking students who ranged in age from five to eleven years. In this way, all 30 Spanish-speaking students would be observed over a period of 2 weeks so that subject selection could begin. It was decided that the researcher

would visit the classroom an average of 10 hours per week from February through May. The teacher suggested that if more data were needed, the researcher could follow many of the subjects through a summer program which would be held for a 6 week period at the beginning of the summer. The teacher suggested also that she send the letters of consent to the parents and, when returned, she would return them to the researcher. The first day of observation was scheduled for February 1, 1984.

#### Description of the Site-Classroom

This study was conducted in a public elementary school in a southeastern city with a population of approximately 150,000. The school was one of two schools in a district where bilingual children were bussed daily for full-day programs which include regular class instruction, ESL, and bilingual classes. The surrounding suburban neighborhood was characterized as lower to lower middle class. The student population of this 556 member school was 30 per cent black and 70 per cent white and represented families from both middle and lower socioeconomic groups. The middle class children mainly were children of parent-students who attend a nearby university and, therefore, resided in university family housing. The subjects in the present study are children of this group of parent-students.

In the school, there were four classrooms for each grade, kindergarten through fifth grade. Ancillary classes with special rooms included a media center--library with over 11,909 volumes, music room, testing and diagnosis room, special education room, cafeteria-auditorium, and two bilingual classrooms. Ancillary teachers on the faculty included a curriculum specialist, varying exceptionalities teacher, guidance counselor, music teacher, media specialist, four bilingual ESL teachers, and physical education teacher. One half-time art teacher and a half-time speech therapist were available for most of the school year. Art instruction was offered for half of the school year.

The classroom studied was known by the children as the "bilingual class" but was termed the ESL room by adults. The room was a large classroom, formerly a fourth-grade classroom. One entrance was used, although two front doors faced the hallway which led outdoors and to the library. Figure 1 shows the rather atypical classroom arrangement, which allowed much room for movement and small group activities. Chalkboards lined two walls of the classroom which formed the directed teaching areas. On the third wall were individual storage "cubbies" which were rarely used by the children. The other wall was mainly windows with a low shelving unit and counter top, where many of the children's activities, books, and games were stored.

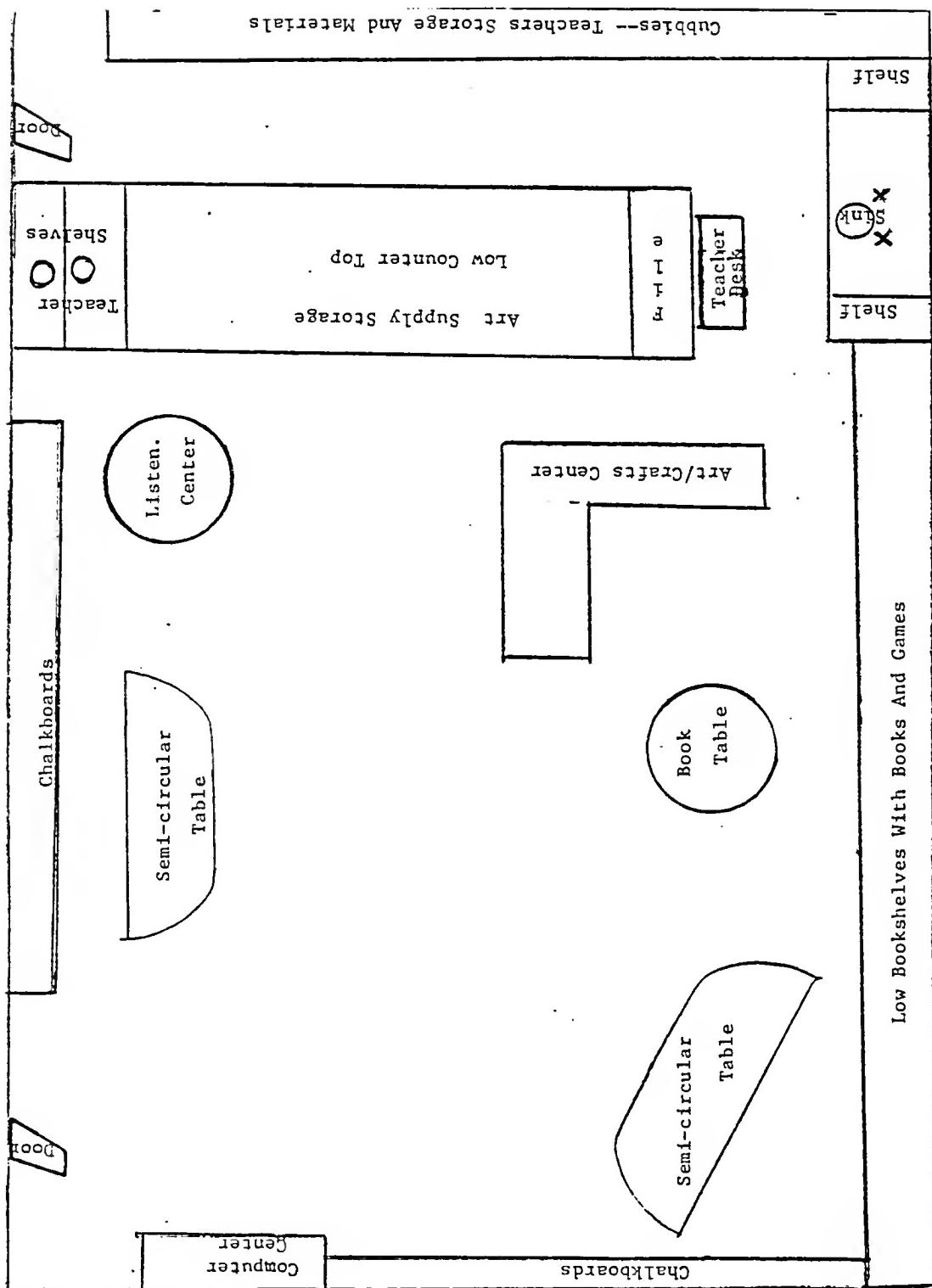


Figure 1. Classroom map

Separating the "cubbies" from the rest of the room was a long shelving unit which had some teacher closets at one end and then a series of low drawers covered by a working counter top where all art supplies were housed. At the end of this unit near the sink was one teacher filing cabinet and a desk which the teachers used for plan books, record keeping, pencils, and mainly teaching supplies. The desk was not typically used by the teachers during the time of this study although many notes, papers, or important pictures were often retrieved from it.

The center of the room had six work areas with tables of various shapes and chairs of different sizes. Children chose their seats based on friendships and were rarely asked to move somewhere else unless a change of activity occurred (i.e., switching from a directed lesson at chalkboard to an art area for an art activity). The learning-center areas were roughly classified as follows: computer center, two directed-teaching centers, arts center, listening center, and book table. The two semi-circular tables were used primarily by the two teachers when the children arrived for their ESL time. The ESL time was a 45-minute period daily. Directed language, writing, or reading lessons were conducted at these centers. As the group time ended, children were allowed to choose other activities at the other centers. The computer center was used by one or two children at a time, often with teacher

assistance at the beginning. Children frequently elected to work in the art area. Most art work was done independently, though occasionally a teacher or aide gave assistance. At the listening center, there were two typical activities--a cassette/book and language master, which were used frequently to practice new vocabulary words, sentence, or other teacher-prepared materials. The book table was a small round table with two small chairs near the windows. This center was chosen most frequently by the children. They worked in twos, enjoying sharing a book or playing a game. A selection of books and games was available along the window ledge for use at the book center. Occasionally, this reading/game table became a writing desk for a child who wrote independently by separating himself from the other center areas.

#### Research Methods and Procedures

##### Overview

The research reported here was an ethnographic investigation of the composing behaviors of five young bilingual children. The product of the research was a description and analysis of these composing behaviors and the views of writing of these five children. The theoretical framework of the researcher was symbolic interactionist theory. Participant-observation, ethnographic interviewing, audiotaping, and unobtrusive

data collection techniques were used to gather the data. Data analysis was ongoing as the field note record was made and throughout the analysis-of-data phase, which comprised the four-month study and the final analysis phase. This section describes the methods used in the study and includes research procedures and methodological issues.

#### Data Collection

The composing behaviors of young bilingual children are difficult to ascertain. Numbers of observations of a specific behavior were made before a particular behavior was viewed as significant in terms of frequency of occurrence. The data clustered around a particular behavior that was seen as a recurrent pattern. Many hours of observation may yield few behaviors related to composing in a classroom where the main focus, according to teacher report, is the development of oral-language skills in a second language. Special data gathering techniques and analytic methods were required to organize the data collected into understandable segments which would describe the composing process as well as capture the perspectives or views of writing of these five subjects.

Spradley's (1980) research model was used in this study. His ethnographic research model was chosen because it included the asking of questions, collecting and recording of data, analysis of the data, and beginning the cycle again. The data for this study included written

field notes which were transcribed onto protocols. Protocols were records of 145 hours of direct observations in the classroom. Two additional data sources were (1) records of formal and informal interviews with teachers and students and (2) unobtrusive measures which aided in the discovery of the composing behaviors and participant-perspectives. These three data collection strategies are described in the following section: participant-observation, interviewing, and unobtrusive measures.

Participant-observation. The researcher used participant-observation as the main tool for data collection in this study. Participant-observation is most often associated with the field of anthropology. This method has been used successfully by sociologists and educational researchers who are attempting to construct the social meaning of a given situation. According to Schwartz and Jacobs (1979), participant-observation is the principal tool of the qualitative naturalistic method. This method requires the researcher to assume a role in the situation observed. The researcher may or may not play an active role but attempts to "see" the subjects and the context as the participants perceive the situation; in other words, to understand the given situation from the participants' point of view and discover what might have motivated them to do what they did during these observations and "what these

acts mean to them at the time" (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979: p. 8).

Participant-observation was used in this study to describe the setting, the teachers, the students, and the interactions within this context. Two levels of participation are described by Schwartz and Jacobs (1979): the unknown observer and the known observer. The unknown observer "undertakes to study a social situation that he is or is becoming an integral part of" (Schwartz & Jacobs, p. 53). The known observer's role is detached, distant, and has limited involvement. The level of participation in this study compares with the known observer level of participant-observation. This strategy insured the investigator was less likely to take for granted the subject's knowledge because he/she was an outsider and was discovering the relevant information in the setting under study.

In this study, the researcher assumed the role of a "note taker" which is similar to the "known observer" described by Schwartz and Jacobs (1979). The teachers were aware of the researcher's presence, as were the children, who were told that the researcher was collecting notes about what bilingual children do in ESL classrooms. The level of participant-observation for this study, as described by Spradley (1980), was passive participant-observer. In speaking about passive participation in a social context, Spradley wrote that the researcher "is

present at the scene of action but does not participate or interact with other people to any great extent; if the passive participant occupies any role in the social situation, it will only be that of bystander, spectator, or loiterer" (1980: p. 54). In this study, the researcher usually sat away from the group taking written notes. Initially, she rarely spoke with the children and attempted to be nonreactive to requests for information or help with assignments. Later in the study, the researcher asked questions of the children and their written products in order to understand their writing behaviors, clarify speech messages, and gain insights about their perceptions of writing. Taking written notes often was done in Spanish and questions were sometimes asked of subjects for clarification. Interviewing with students and teachers will be discussed in detail in a subsequent section.

After the initial observations of daily classroom life were made, the researcher began to focus on the writing-related activities and written artifacts. In the beginning stages of the study, few writing sessions were observed; however, teachers wrote daily in front of the children and these observations helped greatly in the final analysis as they formed the sections on teacher practices which affected the composing behaviors of children. Writing occurred generally in the small groups with one teacher and four or five children. Since the two groups observed

attended ESL class for 45-minute periods, three of the subjects were observed with one teacher first and were followed by the next group of five children, two of whom were subjects in the study.

The researcher as well as the participating teachers became concerned about the quantity of writing that children were producing without teacher direction. The following excerpt from the field note record demonstrated this concern:

Researcher: (I arrived late and let the teachers know I will be attending the International Dinner that night.)

Mrs. Summer: Oh, what are you bringing to eat?

Researcher: Arroz con pollo! [chicken with rice].

Mrs. Summer: Oh, that sounds great. Sharen, I've been meaning to talk to you about the last few classes.

Researcher: Um hum.

Mrs. Summer: They really aren't writing very much lately. I feel so bad. I wish we had more time. Maybe during the summer? (In an earlier observation, Mrs. Summer informed me that many of these subjects would be attending summer school.)

After a discussion with the researcher's committee members, it was decided that some suggestions which might generate more independent writing by these children could be shared with teachers. As a result, teachers added individual mail boxes for each child in the two observed groups and a box for each of the teachers. Each day, teachers wrote to

their students a one phrase message meaningful for the individual child. This planned addition to the curriculum took place in the final three weeks of the study. Daily notes were written and the children responded by writing or drawing "messages" back to the teachers. An increase in the frequency and quality of writing was observed during this period of the study. These findings are presented in chapter V.

The researcher made a total of 47 observations to the ESL classroom which involved 145 hours of classroom time. The days of the week varied although observations were fairly evenly distributed over all the days of the week during the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. which accounted for the two ESL times in which these five subjects attended ESL. The researcher left the classroom each day at lunch time and would informally schedule the next day of observation with the teachers.

Observer impact--Unobtrusive measures. Participant-observation without regard to the level of participation influences normal classroom life. As previously mentioned, the teachers in this study were sensitive to the researcher's study when they both stated they "wished more writing was occurring." The teachers' educational experience, their voluntary participation in the study, and the long term nature of this study probably decreased observer impact. The researcher's teaching experiences and

familiarity with classroom scheduling and procedures also may have reduced observer impact.

According to descriptions by several ethnographers, unobtrusive measures are any data which remove the observer from the interactional scene or context under study (Denzin, 1978; Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979; Wolcott, 1976). These measures are items such as teacher-made materials, student documents like cumulative files, and children's school work like the writing samples collected in the present study. The collection of these types of data attempts to minimize the possibility that the researcher's presence "may change the world being examined" (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979: p. 75).

Unobtrusive data were collected in this study from the first visit to the school through the last day at the research site. Some of these data included results of students' ESL testing records, lesson plan outlines for the semester work, writing samples of all the ESL students observed, teacher-made artifacts related to writing, newsletters from the bilingual classes, and photographs of artifacts found in the ESL classroom. These data provided information which would complete descriptions of teachers and students and their writing processes. Additionally, these data were of use in substantiating or triangulating (Denzin, 1978) the other sources of data collected.

Informal and formal interviewing. In this study, informal and formal interviews were held and recorded. Informal interviews were written into the field note record. Formal interviews were preplanned and scheduled with teachers and were audiotaped for future transcription. These formal interviews were conducted in the nearby library office with individual children and were planned in advance with the teachers. The researcher used as a guide Spradley's description which stated that an informal "interview occurs whenever you ask someone a question during the course of participant-observation" (1980: p. 123). The formal interview, however, resulted from a specific request by the researcher to hold the interview. Preplanned-questions were used to guide the interviews. These open-ended questions were used to elicit other questions or comments from the interviewee. For example, the following interview questions were asked of the five subjects in this study:

1. What do you do in bilingual class?
2. Tell me what it is you like about English class?  
What you don't like?
3. Tell me, do you know how people learn to write?
4. Do you ever write? Do you like to write?
5. When you do write, what things do you write about?
6. Why is it important for people to write?

During one of the formal interviews, one subject

volunteered, "My father writes and my mother writes. My father writes about plants and poison plants." The researcher had asked what do you write at home? The nature of these interviews was conversational and guided by the questions and by the responses of individual children. Some of the interviews lasted 45 minutes and with other less verbal children shorter interviews were recorded. The guided questions used by the researcher in student and teacher interviews may be found in appendices F and G.

The accuracy of interview data was judged by comparing what interviewees said about writing and what they were observed doing while writing during observation sessions. Becker and Geer (1970) emphasized the importance of comparing observed behavior and verbal accounts. Although the main data gathering technique employed in this study was participant-observation, the interviews provided additional data to confirm emergent hypotheses about composing behaviors and views of writing. Much of the interviewing was informal and functioned to focus on discrepancies between verbal reports and observed behaviors. For example, in initial interviews, teachers indicated that invented spellings were acceptable. During observations, however, teachers were observed correcting spellings or supplying correct spellings to children. When questioned later in the study about this practice, teachers were unclear about whether to correct or accept children's

invented spellings. In this example, the impact of interviewing was seen. The teachers were probably more aware of the practice because the researcher focused on their practices regarding spelling errors. This effect was unavoidable if interviews were held to supplement observational data.

A further check on the validity of teacher interviews was the assurance by the researcher that all data collected were confidential and that their anonymity was protected. The relationship between teachers and researcher was judged to be one of mutual trust and both teachers readily accepted the researcher's plan for interview during the study. Neither of the teachers expressed concern over the interviews conducted with the children.

#### Analysis of the Data

The data collected through observations, interviews and unobtrusive measures focused on the writing-related behaviors, speech messages, and written products of the children in one ESL classroom. The major portion of the data was handwritten and then typed onto protocol sheets for analysis. Written records from the study included field notes, transcribed interviews, and a researcher journal.

The field note record was constructed by weekly additions to the protocols. During an observation, the researcher wrote as much as possible during a two-hour

period, attempting to capture verbatim statements by the children and teachers. In the initial stages of the study, all activities were observed and recorded. As the study progressed, observations focused on writing events only and only the five subjects and their interactions with one another and their teachers. Following the observation, the field notes were "filled in" with longer more explanatory statements which described the scene for that day more fully. The researcher attempted to keep verbatim statements in quotes for later use as examples. This procedure follows the one described by Spradley (1980) for expanding field note accounts. This "expanded account" was then typed onto more formal protocols which were dated and numbered by line and page. Comments and questions which arose from daily observations were recorded in the researcher's diary on each day of observation.

Examples of written work, writing samples, or letters written to parents were collected or kept in that particular day's field note record. Crucial to this study was an accurate and dated record of writing samples, because many children wrote notes to each other and to their teachers. These notes were often photocopied by teachers, dated, and saved for the researcher. In order to understand the dialog in writing between the students and teachers, this procedure was arranged. Written notes to teachers were also collected where possible. Some

student-generated samples were hand copied by the researcher, because the written message was to be taken home or to another class and reproduction was not possible.

Formal interview data were transcribed from the audiotapes onto protocol forms and became part of the field note record labeled "interview data."

The final written record collected was the researcher's diary. In this study, the researcher wrote the following for each day of observation: the date, time, group observed, activity observed, people present, questions or hunches about the data, to-do notes for the next scheduled observation. Also written down were any new elements or people who might have become important at a later date. Questions or problems about the research itself were also recorded along with the results of several conferences with the researcher's advisor or committee members.

The data analysis was an ongoing process which incorporated the written data sources discussed previously. The Spradley (1980) DRS model was selected to guide the data collection and analysis procedures in this study. The Spradley model is an ethnographic research model which is cyclic in nature. In this methodology, the researcher has guiding questions which lead into the research but are added to by field observations and other questions which emerge from the data. As data are

collected, they are analyzed and more focused observations can then follow. The researcher's task in analyzing these data could be described as putting together a mosaic. The data must be searched systematically to order and make the data understandable. Bogdan and Biklen described this process as "working with (the) data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned and deciding what you will tell others" (1982, p. 145). This process of data analysis was ongoing and consisted of four stages. Each phrase of the analysis related to the types of questions the researcher asked and the focus of the observations. This cycle of questioning, collecting, and analyzing was repeated throughout the study. The four phases of analysis were

1. Domain analysis: The researcher found categories of meaning from the field note records. These categories were formed by reading the protocols with specific questions in mind to sort the data. Spradley (1980) identified these questions specifically as kinds of things observed, kinds of places observed, kinds of parts, kinds of results of things, kinds of reasons for things, kinds of places for doing things, kinds of uses for things and ways to do things, kinds of sequences of things, kinds of characteristics of things?

Examples of early domains were kinds of written products and kinds of statements. This was a sorting process which uncovered the categories of composing within the context studied.

2. Taxonomic analysis: The next step in the analysis expanded the data by further analysis of the domains to see how they were organized. The goal of taxonomic analysis is organization of the domains as they relate to one another. For example, the cultural domain kinds of statements about writing was a large domain which was divided into teacher statements and student statements. In building the taxonomy, these levels were further defined by more levels such as translation statements, positive statements, direction statements ("You write it this way!"), and social statements ("I like to write to my cousin in Colombia). In developing the taxonomies, the scenes (domains) were filled in further and interrelated.
3. Componential analysis: The third level of analysis brought the subjects into focus as it considered the meanings or attributes they assigned to the various categories observed. Componential analysis required a search through the established domains to find their characteristics and discover their

meaning for this particular setting. For example, confirmation questions were a type of teacher-student question in this classroom. Certain characteristics which defined this type of question were seen as components for student-teacher interactions.

4. Theme analysis: The final level of analysis sought to chart the more global or broader issues within the context being investigated. After identifying the parts of the scene (domains, taxonomies components), this level of analysis tied together the elements of the scene which were recurrent. A cultural-theme pattern or recurrent generality emerged over several domains and could be used to describe or make sense of the whole context in this study--the context of writing.

The DRS model utilized in this study gave the researcher a strategy which was systematic and organized. The data were analyzed to identify the composing behaviors and the writing events which related to the children's views of writing. Further analysis revealed other variables which had an impact on these composing behaviors and views of writing. The strategy of data collection and then analysis is fundamental to the research model chosen for this study. Some methodological issues which may have affected this process are discussed in the following

sections: (1) researcher bias and qualifications and (2) validity of findings.

### Methodological Issues

The effects of the researcher in a naturalistic setting must be addressed as findings are presented. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982) stated, the researcher is the key instrument in qualitative research. The issues which appeared crucial in the present study were researcher qualifications, background, bias, and the validity of findings.

Researcher qualification and biases. In qualitative research, the methods of data collection are dependent upon the participant-observer--the researcher. A discussion of the factors which may affect the results of the study because of the researcher's presence is necessary. This section discusses qualifications of the researcher and potential areas of bias and the attempts made in this study to control for these areas.

Ross (1979) classified the essential characteristics for a qualitative researcher into two categories: (1) researcher's knowledge of the research techniques, and (2) researcher's knowledge of and sensitivity to classrooms. Ross (1979) stated that experience in the classroom, educational background, and knowledge of education theory and children contribute to the knowledge of and sensitivity to classrooms. The relevant experiences of this researcher

follow:

1. The researcher was a classroom teacher in a large urban school district for five years in elementary education, in grades one through four and worked directly with children from Mexican-American and Pima Indian backgrounds.
2. The researcher earned an M.A. in special education with specialization in learning disabilities and educational diagnosis.
3. The researcher worked as an educational diagnostician for five years in a Spanish-speaking country, where in addition to United States children other children from multilingual-multicultural backgrounds were schooled.
4. The researcher was responsible for writing descriptive case studies for children across three elementary schools in the above mentioned system as well as making observations of teachers and students in their classrooms for diagnostic purposes.

The essential qualifications for an ethnographer as delineated by Wolcott (1976) serve the qualitative researcher equally well. Wolcott discussed the importance of the knowledge of the researcher with regard to the researcher's knowledge of theoretical perspective as well as what he called the "less tangible" skills: sensitive

and perceptive observation, personal stability and flexibility, and the skills of a storyteller and writer (1976: p. 28). Criteria for doing the ethnography of schooling in regard to Wolcott's definitions would include (1) extensive reading in cultural anthropology; (2) developing the skills of micro-ethnography focusing on educationally relevant events; and (3) studying standard topics in ethnography. The following experiences of this researcher are presented as related to Wolcott's criteria:

1. The researcher received her B.A. in cultural anthropology and minored in Spanish and is bilingual.
2. The researcher has completed coursework for a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction including coursework in early childhood, bilingual education and educational administration. Reading and writing courses have been a special interest for her. Extensive reading has been completed in these areas as evidenced by the references listed in the reference section.
3. The researcher has taken two courses which provided the knowledge and theoretical background for qualitative research. Extensive reading apart from these courses has included "classic" texts in ethnography and qualitative research, as well as

the qualitative studies of others working in the area, writing and the language arts.

4. The researcher has completed a pilot study, using qualitative methods, which was written for presentation at a regional conference.

The researcher may have met the criteria for conducting qualitative research suggested by Wolcott and yet must clearly delineate the values or assumptions she personally brings to this research study. In this study, data which confirmed researcher incoming biases were questioned. The researcher searched for negative examples of emergent findings especially in regard to conclusions which corroborated researcher beliefs. For example, when the writing curriculum was altered in the final stages of research, the increase in frequency and quality of response was methodically questioned since this finding matched a researcher bias. The biases of the researcher may indeed have effects on the outcomes of the research. In order to deal with this, the following list of beliefs in relation to this research presents an awareness to the reader by which the findings of the study may be evaluated--the researcher:

1. supports the teaching of bilingual children in their native language as well as the second language they are acquiring and further believes that the classroom language environment should be

- rich in child-centered meaning-based activities and not formulaic models of discourse or sequences of isolated writing skills,
2. approaches children's attempts to make oral and written language meaningful as a constructive and interactive process which must be nurtured by adults--teachers and parents--in supportive and nondidactic ways,
  3. believes that the teaching and learning of writing are influenced by the actions of others--both peers and adults--as well as numerous other variables such as individual differences, personality, oral language development, and ability,
  4. assumes a symbolic-interactionist perspective which defines writing and children's views of writing as products of the interactions of individuals in various contexts.

Validity measures. Some of the measures taken to insure validity of this study have been discussed above. Validity is a central issue for qualitative research. Do the findings of the study represent reality as it was observed and do the categories devised by the researcher correspond with those occurring in the classroom context (Spindler, 1982)? The factors which increased the validity of this study are discussed in the following order: (1) length of study, (2) triangulation of methods, (3) search

for negative examples of hypothesized behaviors, and (4) discussion of findings with study participants. The long period of time, or what Spindler (1982) termed "prolonged and repetitive observation time," for data collection allowed the researcher to become familiar with the classroom scene and the participants. The numbers of times a single composing behavior was exhibited by one subject and across subjects gave evidence for its inclusion as a valid finding of the study.

The use of participant-observation, interviewing, and unobtrusive measures allowed for triangulation or corroboration of these measures, confirmation of the composing behaviors and the perspectives of the participants. The researcher checked these three data sources for evidence of a reported finding: (1) observation by the researcher, (2) statements by the child or his/her teacher, and (3) writing samples or school document. If these data sources were congruent, the researcher was satisfied that the finding was substantiated. Another procedure discussed by Becker (1970), and employed in this study, was searching the data for antithetical examples of the findings. For example, if a particular composing behavior appeared in the data, the researcher collected all instances of this behavior and attempted to find any negative instances when the child did not use this behavior in order to confirm the composing behavior as a pattern for (a) particular child(ren). This

practice of searching for negative examples of findings was used for each of the findings in the final phases of analysis.

A final technique for establishing the validity of this study was the sharing of findings with the teachers who were participants in the study. This was an ongoing process from beginning analysis stages. When a particular phenomenon occurred in the data, the researcher questioned the teachers for feedback on their interpretations of a subject's composing behaviors. This practice added to the congruence of findings and final conclusions.

In the following chapters (IV and V), the subjects, the teachers, and the findings of this study are presented.

CHAPTER IV  
DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTS, TEACHERS, AND PRACTICES

The Subjects

The subjects of this study came to the ESL classroom in this school on a daily basis. The children selected as subjects for the study came from two time periods of this classroom. One group of five children met at 9:30 a.m. with the head teacher. The children in this group were the most recent arrivals to the United States and all spoke Spanish. Three of the subjects of this study were chosen from this group. A second group of five children attended ESL from 10:30 a.m.-11:15 a.m. These children varied in the length of time they had been in the United States and also in the language they spoke. The two Spanish speakers, the girls in this study, were selected from this group.

Both groups attended this ESL classroom for a 45-minute period daily. In this study, observational data were recorded on all the children in both groups; however, the study focused on five subjects who were chosen as emergent writers making the transition from Spanish to English. At the end of the study and the school year, each of the five children was speaking English 80-90 per cent of

their ESL time and writing in English at various developmental levels.

#### The Children as Subjects

All of the five Hispanic children who are the subjects of this study had recently arrived from Central and South American countries and all had at least one parent who attended a university as a full-time student. The five children, whom the researcher called for purposes of this study, Jesús, José, Marco, Teresa and Yolanda,\* knew no English upon arrival according to observations, interviews with the children, and teacher report. The average length of stay in the United States as reported by the teachers was one year while the parent(s) completed coursework at the university. One of the original subjects, however, moved back to Venezuela during spring holidays and the researcher was gratified that she had designed the study to include data on all Spanish speakers at the initial observation stages.

Planned observations began in February 1984, and ended May 31, 1984. When the study began, the youngest subject José was 6 years of age and in first grade. Teresa and Yolanda were both seven years old and in second grade. Jesús was eight years old and in third grade. The oldest

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\* The names of children and teachers in this study have been changed to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

subject was Marco who had just turned 10 years old and was in fourth grade. Each of the subjects came to the ESL room daily for a 45-minute instructional period during the morning. In the second grade group, the teacher went to the children's regular classroom and escorted the children to the ESL room. From the other group, the children arrived daily at 9:30 a.m. and chose their seats for the day. Brief descriptions in the following section provide a sketch of each individual child.

#### The Subjects as Children

It must be noted that each child brought with him/her a unique set of skills and abilities with which he or she acquired a new language. Some of the factors which affect this process are personality, verbal interaction strategies, intelligence, motivation, first language control, social skills, and general attitude toward teachers and school (Fillmore, 1976; Cummins, 1984). The following descriptions served to put into perspective the individual differences which may have affected these subjects' acquisition of language and literacy.

José. José was 6 years old and the most recent arrival to the United States at the time the study began. He spoke often of his family and "his country," Costa Rica, and his grandmother whom he wrote to and missed. José arrived each day with a big smile, neatly pressed clothes, and eager attitude for learning. He ran to the mailboxes

in class each day and announced that he had mail and wanted to read it immediately. José, not yet a reader, attempted all of the words he recognized before asking his teachers to "Please, read!" He was confident, motivated, and friendly with his peers. In a formal interview, he related he had lots of friends and he like to play with them after school. José rarely complained and most frequently was excited about the daily plans in ESL class.

José's most outstanding characteristic was his observation of everything. In the classroom, he seemed to watch Mrs. Summer's every movement and tuned in to what other children were saying and doing. As a result, even though he knew no English, he functioned as if he understood most of what was going on and seemed not so dependent on the Spanish translations Mrs. Summer was willing to provide. José was an enthusiastic participant in class activities and cooperated with all projects going on around him. On many occasions, he was observed helping the teacher or other students with their work, a drawing, getting some material. School was obviously very important to José, and he conscientiously asked for notes, took home his unfinished work, and brought in "homeworks" with which his parents had helped him, or took things to his first-grade classroom to complete. José also liked to play. Each time games were a choice, José was one of the first at the table. He enjoyed playing with peers and was

a competitor. Often, José was chosen as a buddy or asked a friend to play a game with him.

José spoke very seldom in initial observations and when he did his words were slow and heavily accented. He watched Mrs. Summer's every move and always sat near her and listened attentively. The first phrases noted were totally in Spanish and often concerned something from or about his parents.

José: Mi mamá y papá quieren al féría y la reunión pero no saben los detalles. Puede poner o notar el tiempo en una nota. [My mother and father want to come to the fair and the meeting but don't know the details. Could you make a note telling the time?]

(Mrs. Summer writes a note to his parents and tells José.)

Mrs. Summer: Aquí es una nota a tus padres describe la reunión y el tiempo, José. Ojalá que te veo esta noche. [Here is a note to your parents telling about the meeting and the time, José. I hope I will see you tonight.]

José: Gracias, adios. [Thank you, good-bye.]

As the study progressed, José began to use one-word sentences. Throughout this process, Mrs. Summer gave lots of encouragement and usually used Spanish followed by the English translation as this account revealed:

Mrs. Summer: Are you looking for green? (green pencil to color in his drawing)

José: Yes.

Mrs. Summer: There is no more green.

José: OK.

Mrs. Summer: Are you ready to tell me something?

José: A mi me gusta sacar el periódico cuando comprarlo. [I like to take the newspaper out of the holder when we buy one.]

Mrs. Summer: Do you remember how to say a mi me gusta?

José: I like.

Mrs. Summer: Good! You remembered. Look, José, it says: I like to get the newspaper out when we buy one.

José mainly drew pictures and occasionally wrote his name on them. During the formal interview with the researcher in early May, he said he "didn't know how to write yet" but he did draw pictures. When asked about other writing, he said he sent his aunt and his grandmother pictures in Costa Rica. In the final weeks of the study, a big discovery was made by José. He could write!

José is now coloring his drawing with colored pencils. Spends lots of time carefully coloring in, rubbing hard to make the colors dark. Then looks up at Mrs. Summer and Jesus.

Mrs. Summer: Did you finish? Did you write something on it? When you write on it, it helps me know about the picture.

José: I know, I know how to write.

José: Hey, Summer, how you write here?

Mrs. Summer: It begins H. H-e-r-e.

Mrs. Summer continues to write, looks up thinking (pensive). Jesus seems to model her. He usually

is much more restless than while writing today. He is writing almost solidly with occasional "help me" questions.

José: That's your note--(he hands it to her, then grabs it and runs to mailboxes)

Mrs. Summer: O.K. O.K.

It appeared from the writing samples and field note record that his need to communicate began the writing process for José.

Teresa. Teresa was seven years old and in second grade. She and her best friend, Yolanda, had been in the United States the longest time, just under 2 years. Teresa came from Venezuela. Teresa was constantly talking and used both Spanish and English, depending on the listener. She also combined some Spanish with English if she forgot a word or did not know it. Teresa liked to be praised and spent much of her time trying to get teacher approval. She related to her teachers how many friends she had, how much her family in Venezuela missed her and loved her. On one occasion, Mrs. Summer was asking the children about themselves, when Teresa had just arrived from her regular classroom:

Mrs. Summer: Hello, Teresa. How are you?

Teresa: Fine.

Mrs. Summer: Teresa, you seem very happy these last few days.

Teresa: Yeah, I passed my test.

Mrs. Summer: Oh, your Level 4 test?

Teresa:            Yeah.

Mrs. Summer: Gosh, that's great--you did so well!

She had difficulty working independently but had learned how to pick seatmates who would help her or at least allowed her to use their work as a model. Teresa was friendly but often irritated other children, because she grabbed their materials and tended to be bossy and bored at times, because she wanted things her way. During a drawing and coloring activity, she insisted that certain children sit in certain places: "Tu tienes que hacer eso!" [You have to do this!]. She instructed her friend who followed her instructions to sit next to her. Teresa then followed up with another order: "If you wanna do both of these you gotta tell Mrs. Path!" Teresa seemed quite pleased with school and was compliant to most demands placed on her, although she whined and complained about long assignments. She usually insisted upon working with Yolanda who provided a good model for language and writing. Teresa enjoyed all the activities that had to do with drama and fantasy, such as making puppets and putting on puppet shows, acting out nursery rhymes, singing in the chorus at the International Dinner, and "shining" at all the practices. Her English, although still developing, never seemed to hamper her involvement with the people around her and her need to get attention, as this example

demonstrates:

Mrs. Summer: What is it Teresa?

Teresa: There is a song I know.

Mrs. Summer: Sing it for me.

Teresa: (Singing) There was a farmer had a dog and Bingo was his name--O, B-i-n-g-o, B-i-n-g-o (etc.).

Teresa rarely departed from teacher instructions and wanted things to be "correct" or like the teacher wanted them. Toward the last few weeks of the study, Teresa did make some attempts to communicate in writing without assistance. Her normal mode of operation was to ask questions at each stumbling block.

Teresa: How do you spell, play? p . . .

Mrs. Summer: Pl makes the sound pl. P-l-a-y.

Teresa: How do you spell ball, d-a-l-l?

Mrs. Summer: B-a-l-l.

Teresa: How do you spell telephone? (then reads her whole letter back to herself while Mrs. Summer looks on saying nothing)

Teresa: My telephone number is - - - .  
(writes it, then says) have to write my name.

Mrs. Summer: Uh huh.

Teresa: I finished.

Mrs. Summer: Good, you did a good job.

Teresa began to invent spellings and frequently chose to write letters to her friends or teachers when given free choice. She was a prolific writer the last weeks of the

study and wrote notes outside of class and brought them in to Mrs. Summer. Teresa had not participated in any writing aside from assignments up to that point. Her messages concerned her activities at home and at school and messages about her feelings toward events. They were replete with invented spellings, which was interpreted by the researcher as a step toward independent writing for Teresa, who previously had been very dependent on others for her writing ideas and writing form. A sample of her early copying and a later letter demonstrate the steps she was taking toward independent writing (figures 2 and 3).

Yolanda. Yolanda at age 7 had spent her preschool and kindergarten years in Venezuela. Yolanda was a mature, respectful and polite child who was quiet and cooperative. She also carried out all assignments neatly and correctly with little assistance from anyone. She appeared "older than her years" in her poised nonattention getting manner. She was always tidily groomed and well dressed. She was often observed, big brown eyes watchful, on the "sidelines" asking no questions or making few comments. There was never a time that Yolanda did not know what was coming next or how to carry out an activity. Yolanda's comments, from the observational record, indicate that she knew what was expected and asked few questions:

Dear Friend

My name is - I

I'm Sev eh

Years old.

I'm From Venezuela

What country are you

from?   
 

Figure 2. Teresa begins to copy

Dear Mrs.

My favorite  
color is blue

I like to ride  
bike I like

to cook

Love

Figure 3. Teresa writes on her own

Let's do another show (gets puppets ready to do a show for her group).

I'm going to get a potato (for the "vegetable stone soup" being prepared).  
Yes, I know how to do it.

I'll help put the vegetables in.

Although she functioned as "the silent one", she was a keen observer and seemed to be learning much.

Yolanda's language was quite well developed in both Spanish and English although her comments in the field note record were not as plentiful as the other subjects.

Yolanda was more the listener and a writer. In an interview with Yolanda about ESL class, she stated that she far prefers doing school work to playing. Her comments emphasize her active involvement in paper and pencil activities:

We do fun stuff.

I make pictures.

I like to do work better than play.

I write stories and things and letters to my grandmother.

In ESL class, Yolanda associated exclusively with Teresa and the two appeared to get along well throughout the duration of the study. When the two were together out of the teachers' range, they chatted busily in Spanish and Yolanda often was the helper academically. Yolanda was self-confident and seemed pleased with her accomplishments in ESL.

As a writer, Yolanda was mainly interested in completing assignments as assigned. She apparently also enjoyed writing and aside from assignments. She wrote letters to her family in Venezuela as she stated in a formal interview with the researcher. This letter writing was again observed toward the end of the study, when Yolanda answered notes that were sent to her. She also wrote notes to members of other groups (see figure 4) and even made a mailbox section for her favorite friend with whom she carried on a daily written dialog. Yolanda appeared to have figured out the writing code and seldom asked for writing assistance.

Jesus.

Researcher: You are doing so well with your English, that's wonderful. Do you ever write stories?

Jesus: Um. Yes, in the school of Colombia.

Researcher: You wrote those in Spanish or English?

Jesus: In Spanish and French!

Researcher: So do you speak French also?

Jesus: Yes.

Researcher: Do your mom and dad speak French?

Jesus: Yes.

Researcher: So you really have three languages.

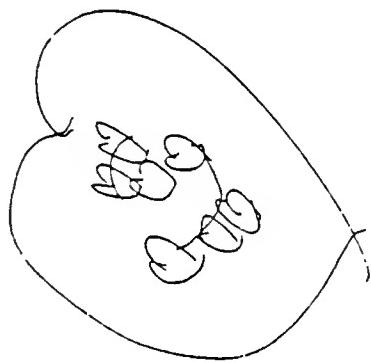
Jesus: Because in school is French and Spanish.

Researcher: And where did you learn English over here?

Dear B

I mite go today to pool  
If I Do my work will you  
play with me? yes or no.

Love Y



5/21/14

Dear Y: - ,

How nice that  
you and Beatriz  
are writing to each  
other and putting  
your notes in the  
mailboxes.

Did you have a  
good time at Field  
Day yesterday? Yes  
what did you do?  
Love,  
Mrs. S.

Dear Y:  
Went to the  
pool. I love you.  
I want  
to go to your house.

Love B

Figure 4. Yolanda expands her writing to a friend

Jesus: Ah, I said 'Hello'.

Jesus always looked at the positive side of things and seemed confident that he would do well in school. In third grade presently, he had attended this school for only six months. For his preschool and primary grades, he attended a small private school in Colombia and learned to read and write in Spanish and French.

Jesus was small for his age, athletic, and usually appeared with a big smile at the ESL classroom door. He was full of questions and never hesitated to ask for help, translations, or new words. Jesus talked during class more than the other subjects and got answers because of his persistent questioning as the following example demonstrated:

(The children were making tissue flowers for a school event and Mrs. Path was working with them and Mrs. Summer was nearby.)

Jesus: Hey, look at dat! (loud booming voice)

Mrs. Path: You don't like it? Undo it!

Jesus: I don't know how to do it!

Mrs. Path come, fast! (with the same loud voice)

Mrs. Path!! (louder)

Mrs. Path: Are these my boys walking around like this?

Jesus: (gets back to his flower until he says) Como se dice, claras?

Mrs. Summer: Claras?

Jesús: Not like brown, black.

Mrs. Summer: Oh, bright. Bright colors.

Jesús: I only use bright colors for my flower.

Mrs. Summer: Yes, that looks good with bright colors. Jesús, I'd like to cut around it for you.

Jesús: OK, the next time I want to do it smaller.

Jesús attended bilingual classes, ESL class, and his regular third grade class daily. He was fascinated with the computer and played and worked on it most days, the researcher observed. Since his family owned a computer, he was the most experienced youngster on the computer in ESL and often assisted others at the computer center as illustrated in this brief dialog:

Mrs. Summer: Did you get to work on the computer yesterday?

Jesús: Yes.

Mrs. Summer: Would you like another chance today?

Jesús: Yes, after I finish this. Marco went up to 15 he can go, too?

Mrs. Summer: No, I don't think Marco will have time today.

Jesús: I'm not going to summer school either because my mother has to go to the ELI (English Language Institute) in the morning.

Mrs. Summer: Oh, do you remember your page number?

Jesús: I don't remember the page.

Mrs. Summer: I can help find it and Marco can sit in.

(Two boys work at the computer and print out the following message before class is over.)

```
Message 10 PRINT "I'm your color computer"
20 PRINT "What is your name"
30 INPUT A$
40 PRINT "Hi," A$
50 GOTO
```

Mrs. Summer: Jesús, it's 10:30, you will have to go back to your class. Jesus, have a nice weekend. I'll give your mom a call about summer school.

Jesús liked to tell of his experiences outside of school and was encouraged to do so in ESL. He talked fondly of "his country" and of his extended family whom he looked forward to being with again when he returned to Colombia. To keep in touch, he wrote letters to his favorite "primos" (cousins) and occasionally called them.

Jesús was one of the more frequent writers in this study and wrote in the most varied forms. The field note record reveals he wrote messages, letters to cousins, programs on the computer, stories, stories on the computer, and letters on the computer at home to his cousins. He is the child who asked for the most frequent help with words to be spelled, translations of words from Spanish to English, and required the most prompting from Mrs. Summer to begin his tasks for the day. The following kinds of help-me questions peppered the field note record for Jesús:

What is an announcer?

Como se dice 'Hace mucho tiempo'? [How do you say--a long time ago?]

Como se dice 'write'? [How do you say write?] (makes a writing motion with his hand)

I don't know the word 'farmyard'.

How you write 'beach'?

Mrs. Summer, how you write 'favorite'?

How you write 'lata' [can]? Lata in Spanish?

How do you spell 'air conditioner' (calls to Mrs. Summer from the computer)

Mrs. Summer, how do you spell 'questions'?

Mrs. Summer reported, that of all the children in her most recently arrived to the United States groups, Jesús had "cracked the language code" the most quickly and would be well on the way to full-time regular class by next year.

Jesús was one of two children who wrote in cursive and, even though he asked for frequent help with spelling, he also invented many spellings. He was the child most attached to Mrs. Summer and wrote to her asking about her family, her activities, and other details. In his informal interview with the researcher, he was the only child that said he wanted to stay in bilingual class all day because there he worked at his level and he liked the class the best. He stated that in his regular class, he was placed in lower levels that he already knew.

Jesús' composing style was one of secrecy. He often sat apart from the group and called questions across the room if help was needed with spelling. Although he was a

slow starter, once he began he wrote feverishly and guarded his work from the view of others until completed. Jesús spoke of schoolwork and homework in a formal interview as well as during observations as being difficult and leaving him little time for play. When questioned about his homework he said he had a lot of "homeworks," "millions." He also talked about his placement in school subjects and revealed he thought writing was important but he didn't like to write. This statement confirms a teacher comment during an interview:

Mrs. Summer: I guess it (returning notes) depends on the individual child like Jesús had to be encouraged everytime to write.

Researcher: Or he just didn't write?

Mrs. Summer: Yeah, right--if I hadn't encouraged him he might not have written although he liked reading the note he received.

The writing Jesús completed generally was assignment related and/or encouraged by his teachers. He appeared less motivated to write for his own pleasure than most of the other subjects.

Marco. Marco was the oldest child and, at ten years of age, was the "little old man" of the group. Marco learned Portuguese in his native country, Brazil. He learned to write in Portuguese but spoke some Spanish because he was from south Brazil where Spanish is spoken. In his interview, he related that most of the children he

played with at school and at home spoke Spanish. During this study, Marco used English exclusively except for a few Spanish words on drawings and some Spanish conversations which took place between Marco and his friends Jesús and José. Being in fourth grade and handling two new languages, Spanish and English, it was no wonder his verbal responses were quite limited in the beginning. Since he lived and played mainly with Spanish-speaking youngsters, it was to his advantage to learn Spanish as well as the English he was attempting at school. Marco was a large, clumsy child, and a bit overweight, but, well liked by ESL classmates. He was a "thinker," not a talker, and usually ventured forth with language only when he was sure he would be understood. Excerpts from Marco's formal interview with the researcher demonstrate the difficulty he faces in acquiring a third language. His comments are interspersed with long pauses where he appears to search for the English words he needs:

Researcher: If you wanted to be a good writer,  
what would you have to do?

Marco: You have to study too much.

Researcher: Study a lot?

Marco: Uh huh? Alooot --- (stretches out  
the word).

Researcher: Do you like to write?

Marco: Yeah, I like to write story by  
myself.

Researcher: You usually write messages when you draw. If you draw, do you usually write about it.

Marco: Not so much.

Researcher: Do your parents ever write at home?

Marco: Yeah, my dad he have to study--he has to help write the books. He copy books.

Marco's sense of humor was captivating as was his infectious laughter. Marco seemed to add humor to the mundane as in the following example:

Mrs. Summer: I will put up a word here.  
Beach. (writes beach on the chalkboard)

Jesús: I will smell fish.

Marco: Comidas por las tiborones [food for the sharks]. (giggles from the group)

Marco: The sharks eat me.

Mrs. Summer: The sharks what? -- I don't get it.

Marco: Las tiborones me comiá [the sharks will eat me].

Mrs. Summer: What sense would that be? (since the discussion was about the five senses)

Marco: Taste.

Mrs. Summer: Oooh! You make the sentence.

Marco: The sharks will taste me. (with a big ah-ha, laugh!)

Also known by his peers for his artistic talent, his drawings were marvelously detailed with various writing usually on the drawing. He added humor to his writings-

drawings, as this example demonstrates from a lesson on body parts:

Marco: I have a good idea like Humpty Dumpty.

Mrs. Summer: That's a great shirt. I like the colors.

Marco: I am a Humpty Dumpty Sheriff. (he says as he writes it on his drawing; see figure 5)

Mrs. Summer: Do you know what these are called Marco? (points to his drawing of muscles) Muscles.

Marco: (laughs) I write my name here  
(writes Ianiv on the paper as a joke)

(Marco put his drawing on the bulletin board, writes another child's name on it and also adds the word Boooo-oo-ooo knowing his friend will find it there next class.)

Mrs. Summer: Great Marco, that is a wild sheriff. He has fallen muscles.  
(figure 5)

Marco enjoyed teasing in a quiet, subtle way which usually imposed on no one and often brought a smile to his peers and his teachers. Marco also shared Jesus' fascination with the computer and writing. He was quite persistent with his assignments which generally "paid off" in terms of drawing, game, or computer time.

Marco was far more tentative in his attempts to speak English and relied on other children or the teacher for a model to begin with. His verbal expressions, therefore, were formulaic as in:

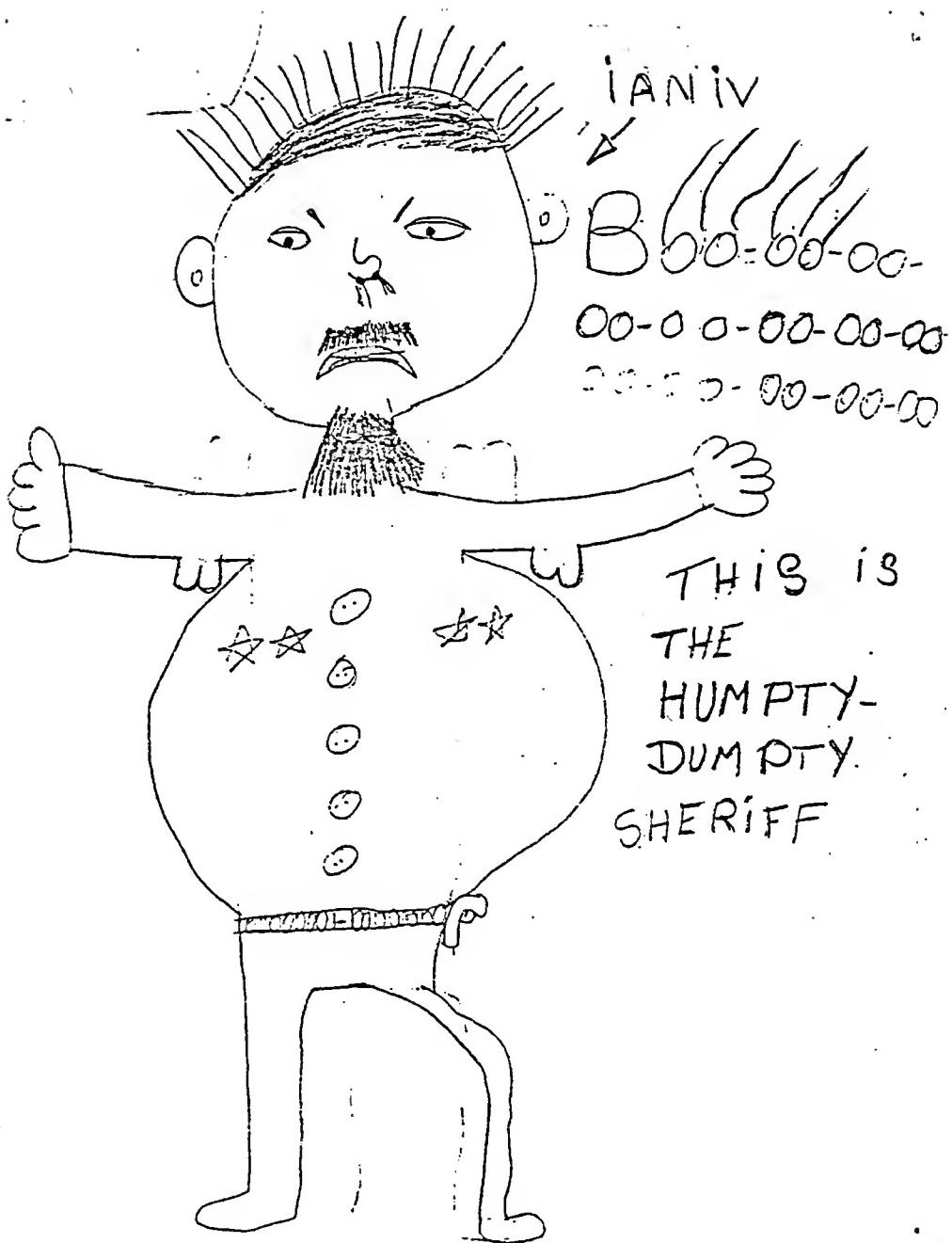


Figure 5. Marco's Humpty Dumpty Sheriff

Sticks, please to make my house.

I finished!

I put it there.

I like . . .

I don't like . . .

I go now.

He did, however, follow the classroom routines and seemed to understand the information around him because he completed his work and participated in the discussions daily. Marco was mature and respectful of his teacher and a good model for his younger and more active class-playmates Jesús and José. He was "hooked" on writing and added script to most everything--artwork, drawings, and letters. He was the most active communicator (in writing) by the end of the term and often wrote two notes to teacher per day and sometimes over the weekend as the letter in figure 6 demonstrates.

#### Teachers' Descriptions

##### Mrs. Summer

Mrs. Summer was a white woman who had taught for three years at this school in the ESL program as head teacher. Before moving here, she had taught grades 1, 2, and 4 in regular classrooms. Mrs. Summer had a bachelor's degree in elementary teaching and completed her master's degree in elementary education, after serving two years in the Peace Corps in Bolivia. Mrs. Summer attributed her return to the

May 21, 1984

Dear Mrs. S.:

Sunday I go to the Morningside Park with my roll family and we walk some, some miles and we see much types of plants, animals and leaves.

We see observatories.

After we was so tired after on the car I was almost sleeping!

Time to finish the note!



Sore

MM

Figure 6. Marco's weekend letter to his teacher

classroom and her great interest in bilingual children to her experiences in South America, where she became fluent in the Spanish language. When she moved with her husband and two children to this state, she pursued this interest by attending several university courses on bilingual education.

Mrs. Summer was the head teacher in the ESL classroom and was frequently asked for advice by her peers and was most often observed as the teacher to hold parent conferences when a bilingual child was involved. Regular classroom teachers, bilingual teachers, and ESL staff members consulted regularly with her and she was always open and accepted their questions, communications, and feedback on school matters. Mrs. Summer usually reserved her lunch period for these conferences. Mrs. Summer spent many lunches in her classroom discussing: problems, scheduling and/or curriculum ideas with fellow teachers.

Mrs. Summer was respected as a person who listened and helped make good decisions, on a personal as well as professional level. During the study, it was apparent that she developed warm relationships with her students and peer teachers. Her willingness to take time and listen, as well as her bright ideas to develop a good image for the bilingual program endeared her to the staff. As the researcher observed the Cultural Fair, another teacher from another bilingual class had this to say:

There was such a lot of work to do to create this fair and Mrs. Summer has done a great job. How

tired she must be because she's been on her feet for four days and greeted almost 400 children into her classroom to see the fair. Each class in the school has been talked to, or danced with, read to or fed in varying degrees and that took a lot of energy.

The researcher perceived the classroom to be an open and comfortable atmosphere which invited her inspection and observation. The relationship between the researcher and the teacher had previously been one of social acquaintance. During the course of the study, conversations, interviews, and frequent observations led to many meetings in which educational goals, family, school frustrations and life plans were topics. The researcher and Mrs. Summer talked on the soccer field, at occasional lunches on the weekend, and at the annual International Dinner for students, parents, and teachers. The researcher felt very welcomed in this classroom, because of this teacher's consideration, enthusiasm, and careful regard for those around her. Mrs. Summer genuinely enjoyed having the researcher in class. She appeared comfortable being observed and assured the researcher that she could come in whenever extra time or schedule changes permitted. She gave ready access to students' writing and interviews and, on several occasions, Xeroxed student writings for the researcher, so the student could take original messages or writings home the same day.

In the final weeks of the study and the school year, Mrs. Summer was very receptive to a suggested curricular

change and insisted on locating and setting up the mailboxes. This willingness to participate and accommodate was apparent in her remarks:

Mrs. Summer: I think they will like the idea.

Researcher: Could we start Monday? I'll get the mailboxes.

Mrs. Summer: Oh no. I have the perfect seed rack I can get from a friend. If you'll just make the name tags, I'll have the mailboxes set up on Monday.

Researcher: Oh I'll bring them with me Monday morning and attach them by 9:15.

Mrs. Summer: Sounds great!

#### Mrs. Path

A supportive attitude characterized the second teacher in this classroom. Even though Mrs. Path worked only five hours a day, she had responsibility for equal numbers in terms of children and brought carefully prepared materials for all the children. Mrs. Path functioned as a team teacher who was responsible for an equal number of groups as the head teacher. Her role differed in two major ways from Mrs. Summer: lesson planning and staff involvement. Mrs. Summer assumed most extra-classroom related functions, whereas Mrs. Path was responsible for working with children in the classroom on the forty-five minute rotational schedule. Mrs. Path finished teaching at 2:30 and then traveled to a nearby educational materials store where she has a partnership in the business. Mrs. Path had taught

full time for six years in the elementary grades and was first certified as an elementary teacher after completing her bachelor's degree in a northern state. When she relocated with her son and two daughters, she began early childhood certification and, subsequently, taught two years in preschool before beginning her four years of teaching in this ESL classroom. Mrs. Path had taken local university courses in bilingual education and will take the newly approved coursework for a new certification which will be available in 1986.

Mrs. Path had a very supportive and responsive manner to all suggestions and often brought in extra materials for special events or something she discovered that fitted the curriculum for that week. When a mini-intervention for writing was planned at the close of this study, her reaction to the plans describe her approach to most situations:

Mrs. Path: Sounds good to me. But when do we start? I'd like to write my notes soon. Should I plan an hour to write notes this weekend?

Researcher: Oh no! I wouldn't want you to do that. It's just five kids so it shouldn't take but 15 minutes. Remember, it's just a one line message specific to that particular child. A personal communication.

Mrs. Path: I don't think Marco will write anything.

Researcher: Well, then maybe he will draw something. Any way they answer back is great. They are communicating.

Mrs. Path added greatly to this teaching team because of her varied experiences at all grade levels and her consistently helpful and positive attitude. Because she was also in the educational materials business she often brought samples of materials or ideas in for new teaching and learning games and activities. Units on fairy tales, cooking, and nursery rhymes were enlivened by her rich resources for books, props, and idea files.

Mrs. Path demonstrated her affection for the children by always being available to greet her groups, reminding them of coming activities and helping them with their daily work. The following phrases were collected by the researcher from the field note record and were illustrative of Mrs. Path's concern for the children and her function in assisting their adjustment to a new language and school culture:

Did you take your note? . . .

Do you want to write me a note? Here, I'll help you . . .

I'll help you write it. What do you want to say?  
. . .

Let me write your name on it . . .

Didn't you give your mom the note?

Mrs. Path does not speak Spanish so was not the principal teacher involved with recently arrived Spanish

speaking children. However, two of the subjects were in her group for small group activities. As mentioned before, the two teachers often worked together with whole group activities.

#### Classroom Practices

In this ESL classroom, oral language was the primary concern of both teachers. In informal interviews, both teachers agreed that their work with these children was primarily the development of oral language. In order to accomplish this goal, all kinds of talk was encouraged and children were free to speak Spanish, English, or a combination of both. Since other languages were also involved, body language, hand signals, and facial expressions were all employed in making meaning of daily lessons. In the beginning stages of this study, since three of the five subjects spoke only Spanish, most of the observations revealed verbal interactions between subjects and teachers. As the study progressed, however, written language appeared more often as the teachers attempted to link their oral communications with the written word.

The teachers in this classroom setting designed instruction for small groups. The normal lesson was forty-five minutes in length and included a brief warm-up talk with the teacher and her group of 5-7 students, an introduction to the lesson, the lesson, and a follow-up

activity which was oral or written. The instructional style was responsive in that teachers responded to questions, ideas, and comments of students. If a child had an idea or activity he wished to add to the lesson, he was encouraged to do so. The responsive teaching style accommodated the goals of this program in terms of promoting oral language and verbal interaction.

In their recorded comments, emphasis was placed on written notes to parents. Letters or notes from other teachers which came to ESL class were read aloud and notices of coming ESL events were hand written and read to the children before they were given to each child to take home. A gradual but steady emphasis on writing began as dictation was taken by teachers from simple names on papers to short notes on drawings or phrases for letters or stories children were composing. One such activity was "Bilingual Buddy Day," when each child invited a buddy from his regular classroom to visit the ESL classroom. In preparation for this event, large drawings were made by each child as a followup to a discussion about what its like being bilingual. Some children wrote directly on their drawings and others wrote dictated messages. The use of Spanish and English written language was demonstrated with this project (figures 7-9). Both teachers made frequent references to the written word and attempted to embed the printed word into this classroom by emphasizing

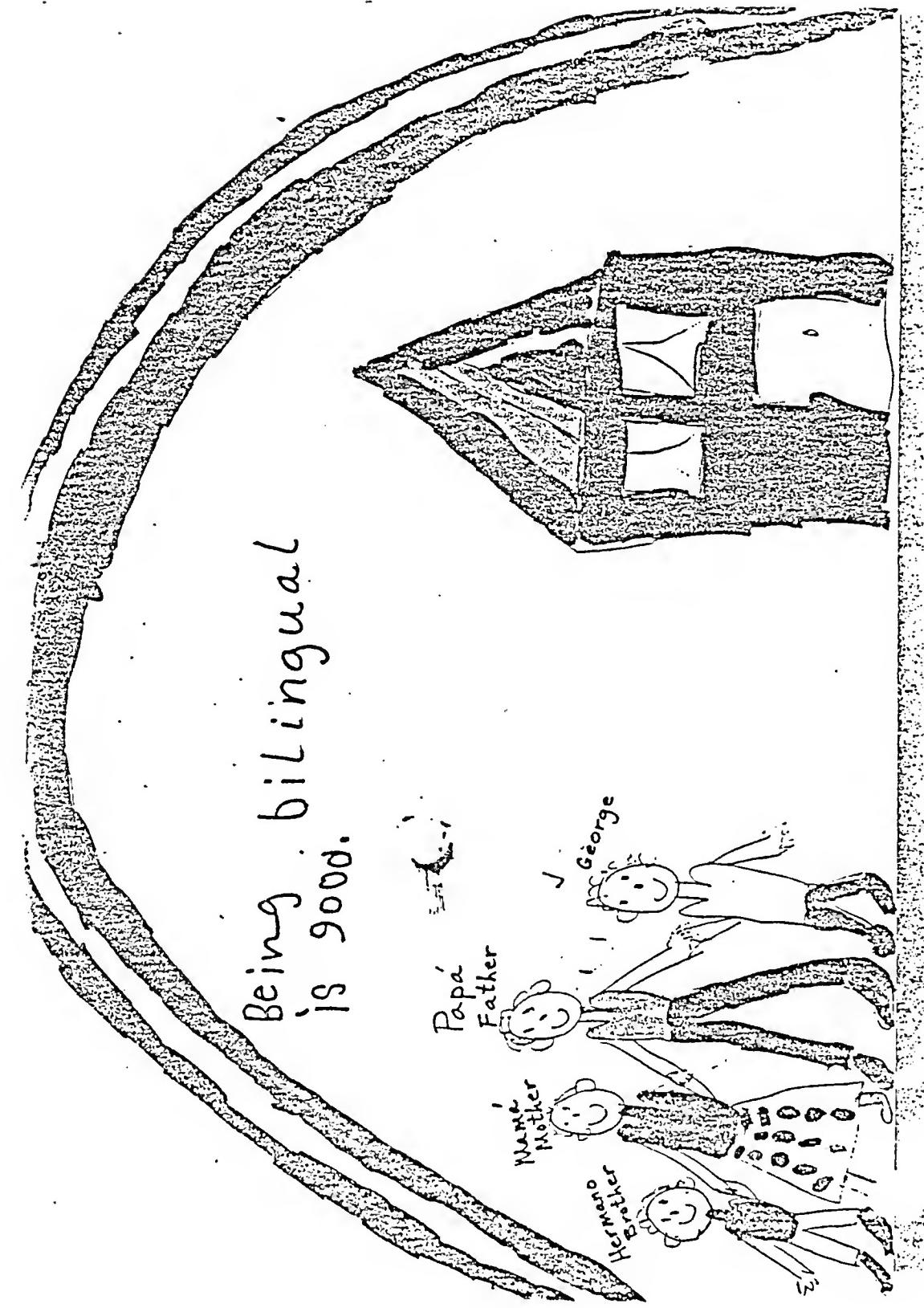


Figure 7. José: Being bilingual is good

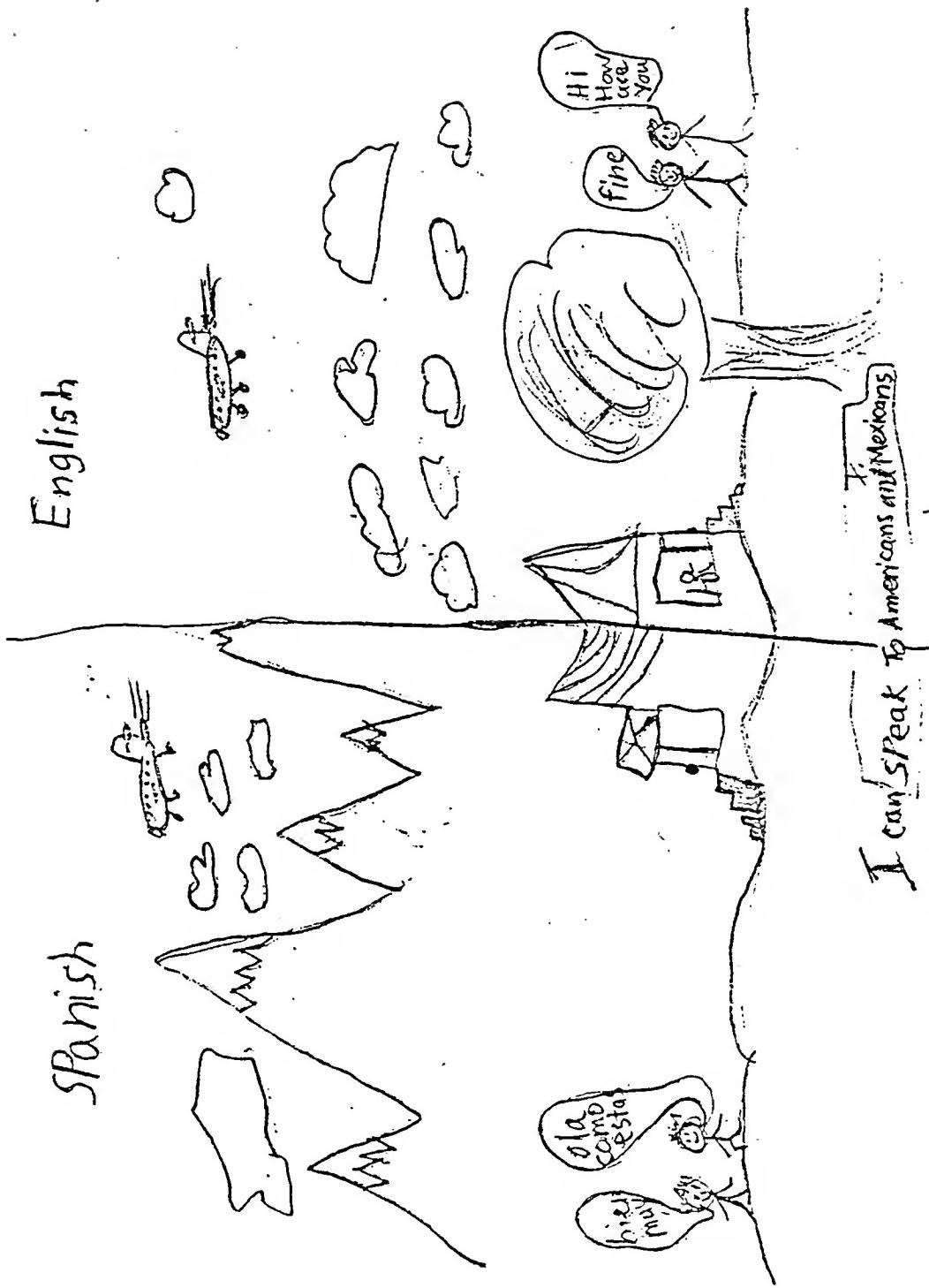


Figure 8. Jesus: I can speak to Mexicans and Americans

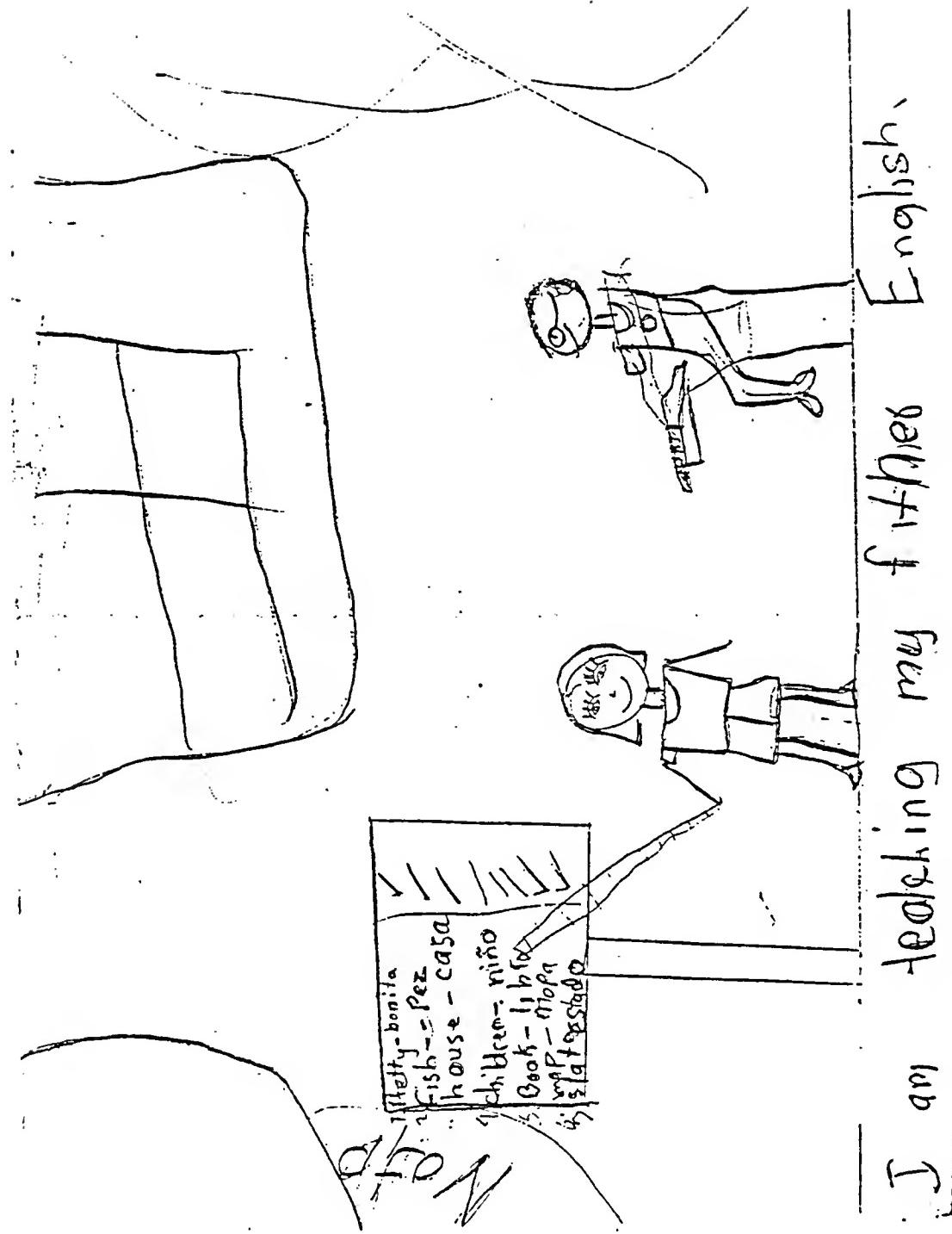


Figure 9. Bilingual Buddy Day: I am teaching my father English

its importance. In taking an inventory of the material culture of this classroom, it was evident that writing was given great value in this context. Teachers made 25 statements about writing, printing, or typing and 35 specific references to types of written products such as letters, notes, stories, messages, experience stories, and drawings with messages. In addition, the teachers wrote daily in front of the children and displayed written work at all of the center areas where children worked. One of the teachers kept a pen and pad of paper near her at all times and made a practice of spelling all words aloud while she wrote them for the child. Her practice was to say the word or phrase aloud and then write it in front of the small group she was working with. She was observed on various occasions writing a short note to parents with individual children which she wrote in front of the child and read to him before sending him on to his regular classroom. During cooking or art activities, it was noted the recipe or directions were printed on a large chart paper which was read to the children as a prelude to the activity. The children were encouraged to refer back to the chart if they forgot a step while they were working and the teachers often referred to these charts if they were asked a question. Important messages were generally written down as the following excerpt illustrated:

Mrs. Summer: Jesús, it's 10:30, you will have to go back to class. Jesús, have a nice weekend. I need to call your mom about summer session.

Jesús: What time?

Mrs. Summer: Why?

Jesús: When I am at home call, ok?

Mrs. Summer: Why? Do you want to talk to me on the telephone?

Jesús: Yeah! (very excited roar)

Mrs. Summer: I'll give you my telephone number and you can call me.

Jesús: OK!

Mrs. Summer: (she writes it out on a piece of paper and hands it to Jesus)

Jesús: Ok, bye Mrs. Summer. (repeats phone numbers as he walks out clutching the scrap of paper) 3-7-8 . . .

Notices of ESL class events which the teachers planned, like the Cultural Fair, Bilingual Buddy Day, and the International Parents' Dinner, were always discussed with the children and letters prepared describing the event. The letters were read to the children and sent home in advance to encourage parental involvement. The three events mentioned were well supported and parents were heavily involved. For the Cultural Fair, parents sent in native costumes from their countries, pictures and posters, homemade foods from Bolivia, Panamá, Colómbia, Nigeria, India, Guatemala, Peru, Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Mexico.

The material culture in this classroom, as described above, placed great emphasis on the development of literacy in these children. When the children began to write (each in his own time), the classroom environment as well as teacher practice supported those early writings. Questions about spelling, word use, or content were answered in Spanish if necessary and then the English model was presented. Early in the study, emphasis was placed on correct spelling and many copying behaviors were encouraged. The following excerpt was from a directed lesson on communication pictures in which Mrs. Summer was attempting to match communication pictures with the child's speech message. Mrs. Summer did most of the talking and insisted on correct form:

Mrs. Summer: I want you to learn this. CB  
radio. This is a CB radio. Now  
you say it.

José: This is a CB radio. Que es esto?  
[What is this?]

Mrs. Summer: This is a road sign.

José: Oh, this is a road sign.

Mrs. Summer: What do you want to write?

José: The road sign you go this way.

Mrs. Summer: Oh (she writes and reads it at the same time). "The road sign says you go this way."

José: (copies it onto the page of his book)

José: I finished.

Mrs. Summer: Oh, great. Look at these. (she looks through the stack of pictures and captions she has finished) I'm going to change. Voy a cambiar algunas palabras [I'm going to change a few words].

Jose: Why?

Mrs. Summer: (moves to get a pencil, whispers to researcher) I'm going to correct the dad's English--that won't go over big.

(Apparently José had taken his book home to get some help and words were misspelled.)

Mrs. Summer: (changes a few, then says) You want to see these, Sharen?  
(researcher nods)

Mrs. Summer: (to student) Mrs. H. wants to see your book because it's finished.

Jose: Okay. (shows his booklet to the researcher)

When questioned about her practice on written corrections, Mrs. Summer responded that she was unsure but felt, when the work would be viewed by others, the form should be correct as this episode indicated:

(After the children had left, the researcher chatted informally with Mrs. Summer.)

Researcher: How did you feel about changing the father's words in Jose's book?

Mrs. Summer: I wondered whether I should, but decided that it was something he would read again and show to others and I wanted it to be correct.

Researcher: I felt he questioned your doing it.

Mrs. Summer: You did? I guess he did react to it.

Researcher: I don't know what I'd do either, it might depend if I had done corrections before with this family.

Mrs. Summer: This is the first time the father has helped him at home.

Researcher: Wonder what you'd do if it were regular class teaching?

Mrs. Summer: I wouldn't correct it because I'd have different goals. I'd be trying to get them to write and anything would be acceptable. In ESL, I guess I'm as concerned with corrected form, because I'm teaching them a new language--a code.

Researcher: So that's a rationale for correcting it and that's important.

Mrs. Summer: I'll have to think about it more because it could limit what's acceptable.

Later in the study, teacher practices appeared to change and more emphasis was placed on the meaning and less emphasis on the form, as this excerpt from an interview with Mrs. Summer illustrated:

Mrs. Summer: I think they all invented spelling in the whole process and I think that probably depending on what the teacher's response was to asking for a word. You know, sometimes the teacher would spell the word and sometimes we would encourage them to write it on their own.

Researcher: Um hum.

Mrs. Summer: And sometimes the kids when they were really into their note writing, they invented it all and didn't ask for any help.

At the close of this study, more children invented their spellings than in the beginning and more daily

writing occurred by individuals than was observed in the first stages of the research project. In table 3, a summary of the observations is provided which includes typical ESL observations and curriculum, teacher interviews, and student interviews. It was noted on this table that writing occurred on a daily basis only in the last phases of the study.

Table 3. Observational Episodes

Episode 1 Grand Tour . . . Classroom description	Episode 2 Room setup: Cultural Fair	Episode 3 Cultural Fair Dances	Episode 4 Cultural Fair Bolivian Dances	Episode 5 Children's Play "The Three Bears"	Episode 6 Children's Play Rehearsal "The Three Pigs"	Episode 7 Nursery rhymes, drawing of characters Oral language
Episode 8 Nursery rhymes Reciting oral language	Episode 9 Jesus' birthday party-- popcorn making	Episode 10* Preparation for "Bilingual Buddy Day" Drawings with dictation	Episode 11 "Bilingual Buddy Day" Oral language play	Episode 12 "Bilingual Buddy Day" Oral language play	Episode 13 Communication movie Oral language	Episode 14* Communication captions Dictations Spanish/English
Episode 15* Letters to bilingual pen pals	Episode 16* Dictation Communication captions Spanish to English	Episode 17* Dictation Spanish to English	Episode 18 Card game nouns names Oral language	Episode 19* Computer story <u>1,000,000</u> <u>Cats</u>	Episode 20 Puppet Show with nursery rhymes	Episode 21 Formal interview with Carolina
Episode 22 Formal interview with Jesus	Episode 23* Story writing based on reading	Episode 24 Cooking "stone soup" recipe Oral language	Episode 25* Computer writing Workbook	Episode 26* Computer writing LIST, RUN	Episode 27 Song practice for Intern'l. Dinner for Parents	Episode 28 Dance practice for Intern'l. Dinner for Parents and Students

Table 3-continued.

Episode 29 Set up daily mail informal dialog interview with both teachers	Episode 30* Note writing from mailboxes	Episode 31* Note writing from mailboxes	Episode 32 Formal interview	Episode 33 Formal interview with José	Episode 34 Formal interview with Teresa	Episode 35 Formal interview with M1 with Yolanda
Episode 36 Formal interview with Mrs. Path	Episode 37* Letter writing for mailboxes	Episode 38* Letters to bilingual pen pals	Episode 39 Film on Foods from other cultures	Episode 40* Recipe writing (favorite foods)	Episode 41* Writing notes to teacher	Episode 42* Computer copies of letters to teacher
Episode 43* Making autograph books	Episode 44 Formal interview A	Episode 45 Formal interview With Marco	Episode 46 Formal interview With Marco & Mrs. Sumner	Episode 47* Computer writing:	Episode 48 Collection of writing samples	Episode 49 Final conference with teachers

Table represents 47 days of observation

\* days writing occurred.

Source: Researcher's Journal, February 1, 1984 - May 31, 1984.

## CHAPTER V CHILDREN'S COMPOSING BEHAVIORS AND VIEWS OF WRITING

The goal of this study was to describe the composing behaviors of five bilingual children and student views of writing. As previously discussed, the researcher adopted an interactionist perspective, which assumed that young children wrote based on their varying interactions in the social context of this ESL classroom. The researcher focused observations on speech messages in Spanish and English about writing, writing-related behaviors (composing behaviors), and written products. These kinds of data served as the indicators of specific composing behaviors and student perceptions of writing.

The data collected were categorized into domains containing similar events which occurred across children and included teachers' practices, speech messages, and written products. The categories which yielded specific information about discrete composing behaviors were drawn from within domains and organized into teacher and student domains which represented composing behaviors, teacher practices, and personality. Particularly useful domains in this analysis were Kinds of Writing by Teachers, Teacher Behavior Related to Writing, Kinds of Statements Teachers

Make about Writing, Kinds of Writing by Students, Kinds of Statements Students Make about Writing, Types of Personal Communications of Students, Kinds of Statements about Being Bilingual. Taxonomies were constructed to represent the composing behaviors, speech messages, and individual characteristics of each child in the study. This form of analysis was accomplished to compare and contrast individual children in order to validate the composing behaviors used by all children, as well as those behaviors peculiar to individual subjects in the study as shown in table 4. As the composing behaviors are described, specific examples from the taxonomies will be provided to represent them. The illustrations chosen were selected from many examples by each child and do not represent the sole indicator of the composing behavior.

#### Composing Behaviors

This study revealed the following behaviors children used while composing: reading back, inventing spelling, copying, body language, prewriting, concealing writing, writing play, and oral-language functioning. Within the category oral-language functioning, several composing behaviors were grouped: confirmation questions, writing talk, asking questions, statements about writing, and taking breaks. Of the twelve composing behaviors, seven were used by each of the subjects in this study: inventing spelling, copying, body language, writing play, writing

Table 4. Composing Behaviors by Subject

Composing Behavior	Child			
	Teresa	José	Jesús	Marco
Reading Back	x			x
Inventing Spelling	x	x	x	x
Copying	x	x	x	x
Body Language	x	x	x	x
Prewriting	x		x	x
Concealing Writing	x	x	x	x
Writing Play	x	x	x	x
Confirmation Questions	x	x	x	
Writing Talk	x	x	x	x
Asking Questions	x	x	x	x
Statements (Negative/ Positive)	x	x	x	x
Taking Breaks	x	x	x	x

talk, asking questions, and making statements about writing. The three most verbal subjects were the children who asked confirmation questions. This behavior seemed to facilitate their writing and was encouraged by the teacher. The three subjects whom teachers reported were readers used the reading back strategy while writing. These children were observed to select books, while in the ESL room, and read silently as a choice and mentioned reading as very important in their individual interviews.

Prewriting and copying were composing behaviors employed by the subjects, who spent most of their writing time with the teacher nearby. These three subjects were observed to write 90 percent of the time, with teacher facilitation at close range. The other two subjects wrote privately or out of class and brought the writing back to the ESL classroom as a general rule.

#### Reading Back

Rereading, or reading back, while writing, was modeled by both teachers 80 percent of the time in this classroom. The teachers would read aloud what they were writing and then reread the message aloud. Both teachers were observed to point to the written text as they read their words or, in the case of taking children's dictation, the children's words.

Reading back was a composing behavior used by three of the five subjects in this study. Customarily, the children would write a few words, and read them back to themselves, and then continue the message. Reading back was observed solely in English and occurred both when teacher was not involved in the writing or with direct teacher involvement. For example, Teresa was planning to write a bilingual pen pal in another school and was trying to begin her letter as she sat near Mrs. Path. Mrs. Path was sensitive to the time left in the period and offered some assistance.

Teresa: (with her head down on the desk, slowly moves closer to Mrs. Path and says) I need some paper.

Mrs. Path: Oh, how about 'Dear Friend, my name is Teresa. I am seven years old and I go to ---- school? (She began a mock letter out loud as she handed Teresa some paper.)

Teresa: No! (She shook her head defiantly and crossed her arms across her chest.)

Mrs. Path: Well, I was just trying to give you some ideas.

Teresa: How do you spell 'my'?

Mrs. Path: (Writes 'my' on another sheet of paper).

Teresa: My name is Teresa. (Writes this phrase and reads it back to herself.)

Mrs. Path: Oh, how are you doing, Yolanda?

Yolanda: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Summer: My name is Yolanda. (Reads back what Yolanda has written.) Now put a period. Now what about you? What can you tell them?

The above example illustrated both student and teacher reading back.

On another day, Marco drew a large picture of a sheriff as a followup to a lesson on body parts. He demonstrated reading back in the following excerpt from the field note record:

Mrs. Summer: This is a Humpty Dumpty sheriff. Can I put it up? Can you write 'This is . . .'?

Marco: (Shakes his head, no, but then begins to write.) This is a Humpty Dumpty Sheriff. (He reads it back aloud and then says) Humpty Dumpty Sheriff.

In taking dictation or writing, the words of a child reading back were also noted. In the following example, Teresa appeared to need the repetitions of hearing the same phrase over and then matching it to the print. Mrs. Summer facilitated writing for Teresa by repeating her Spanish word and then filling in the English translation. Mrs. Summer worked with Teresa and José writing captions on some small pictures which were stapled later into a small booklet on communication. Teresa looked puzzled and said:

Teresa: In a magazine hay many pictures.  
(She is asking the teacher to help her write this phrase.)

Mrs. Summer: Hay is 'there are'.

Teresa: In the magazine there are many pictures. (She repeats her sentence.)

Mrs. Summer: In the magazine there are many pictures. (Repeats her sentence as she writes it next to the picture of a magazine.)

Teresa: (Then she reads it back.) In the magazine there are many pictures.

Reading back was classified as a composing behavior and was also seen in this study as a teaching practice. Three forms of reading back were discovered in observations of writing episodes: student reading back of writings, teacher reading back of students' writings, and teacher reading back of the child's dictation. The interaction between teacher practice and individual perceptions of writing determined which subjects adopted reading back as a helpful strategy to assist them in writing.

Both teachers employed reading back with all of the subjects in the study. Since teachers practice was to work in small groups and read back individually, solitary writers like Jesús and Marco would not often be exposed to this practice. However, Marco did read back his writing during observation and this appeared to be related to one function of reading back: repetition to imprint the language function. Other functions of reading back by children were to "show off" their written products and to check the writing as they wrote.

Invented Spellings

In this classroom, the view of invented spellings appeared to change over the course of the study. In the early stages, although writing was encouraged, protocol analysis revealed an emphasis on correct spellings or a high frequency of spelling the word for the child as needed. In the concluding weeks of the study, teacher practice appeared to place greater value on the written meaning of the message and ignored the spelling involved in the written message. At this point, the teachers encouraged the children to spell the word the way they thought it should be.

All of the subjects in this study invented spellings while writing. During different periods of the study and according to teacher practices, the frequency of invented spellings fluctuated. These nonstandard spellings occurred in messages, letters, and stories written by the children. The most frequent inventor appeared unconcerned with attempts early in the study to use correct spellings. During a story writing sequence, Jesús wrote near Mrs. Summer, after a story was read about barnyard animals. Jesús began his story on his own as follows:

Mrs. Summer: Jesús, you can work on your story with me. What sentence will you start with? What would you like to write about?

Jesús: I want to say . . . (inaudible but begins to write and Mrs. Summer sits right next to him and waits for questions).

Jesús: I don't know the word farmyard.

Mrs. Summer: (writes the word farmyard on her pad near him)

Jesús: (continues to write; does not look at the word she has spelled--invents his own spelling).

In another example, Jesús was composing a story on the computer about a book he had heard earlier that day, A Million Cats, in which he invented his own spellings:

Jesús: Yo escribo one millón de gatos--the title. [I wrote one million cats--the title.]

Mrs. Summer: Oh, so far you have the title. Press enter.

Jesús: Enter (presses enter).

Mrs. Summer: Go ahead and start your story.

Jesús: Cómo se dice 'Hace mucho tiempo'?

Mrs. Summer: Okay, once upon a time, a long time ago.

Jesús: (Types very slowly and with great care) A old man and woman in a house cobert the flowers.  
 (Continues his story until time to go back to class.)

Some children appeared to change their spellings from standardized spelling to invented spellings which mirrored teacher practice. The two female subjects displayed careful attention to correct form and spelling when writing letters or stories in the early phases of this study. When

letter writing to teachers and other classmates became a daily activity, more invented spellings were noted, as evidenced in the following notes written by two subjects in figures 10, 11, and 12.

Another child in the study did not write on his own and for meaning until the final weeks of the study. José spent many months giving dictation and copying exercises, teacher-modeled phrases, or sentences from the chalkboard. José stated, in an interview with the researcher, that he did not know how to write yet. However, when daily messages to and from teachers began in May, José responded by sending Mrs. Summer several drawings, and then he began captioning the pictures with his own words in writing. All of his spellings were invented and relished and read over and over by Mrs. Summer to herself and to her peers. José's messages always included invented spellings. Samples of his invented spellings from collected writing samples were as follows:

"Misi Somam" [Mrs. Summer]

"I ws and disnawod" [I was in Disneyworld.]

"i ws furr and disnawor" [It was fun in Disneyworld.]

"I lov yui misi somre" [I love you, Mrs. Summer.]

"I Lov yu misi scumuu" [I love you, Mrs. Summer.]

"spring is hiri" [Spring is here.]

Individual differences and developmental stages in writing appeared to have an effect on whether or not and when

I like you

I Love

I want to

the Beth

on May 27, 1984.

I gat a

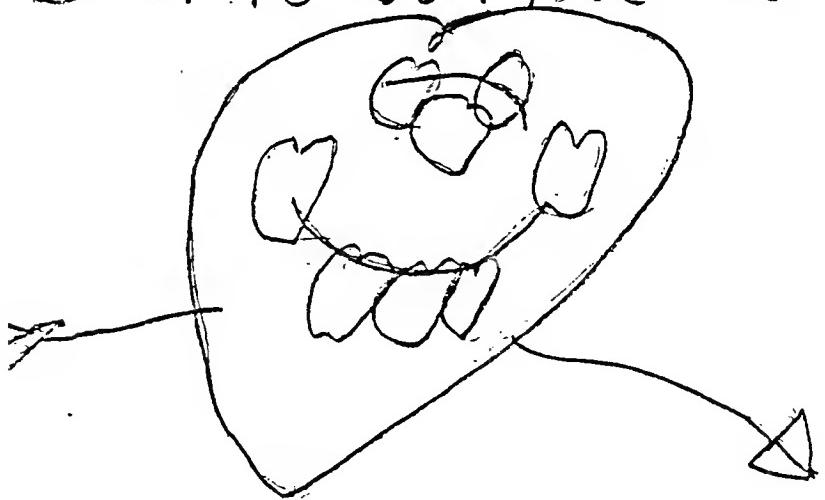
gud time

Love

Figure 10. Invented Spellings

Thank you for rideing me a  
letter will we do funstuf?  
(yes or no)

I like to ride to Beatres.

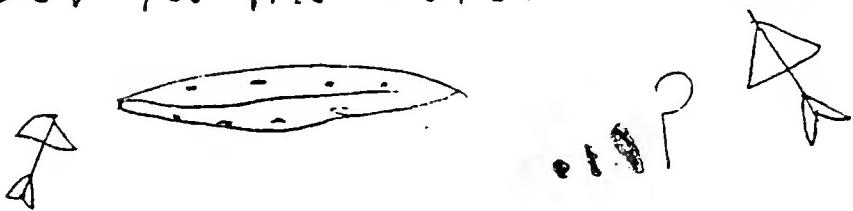


Love

y

Figure 11. Invented spellings

I LOV yu misisisi cu muu



I LOV yu misisisiSo

ooO ♫ ♪

5/22/84

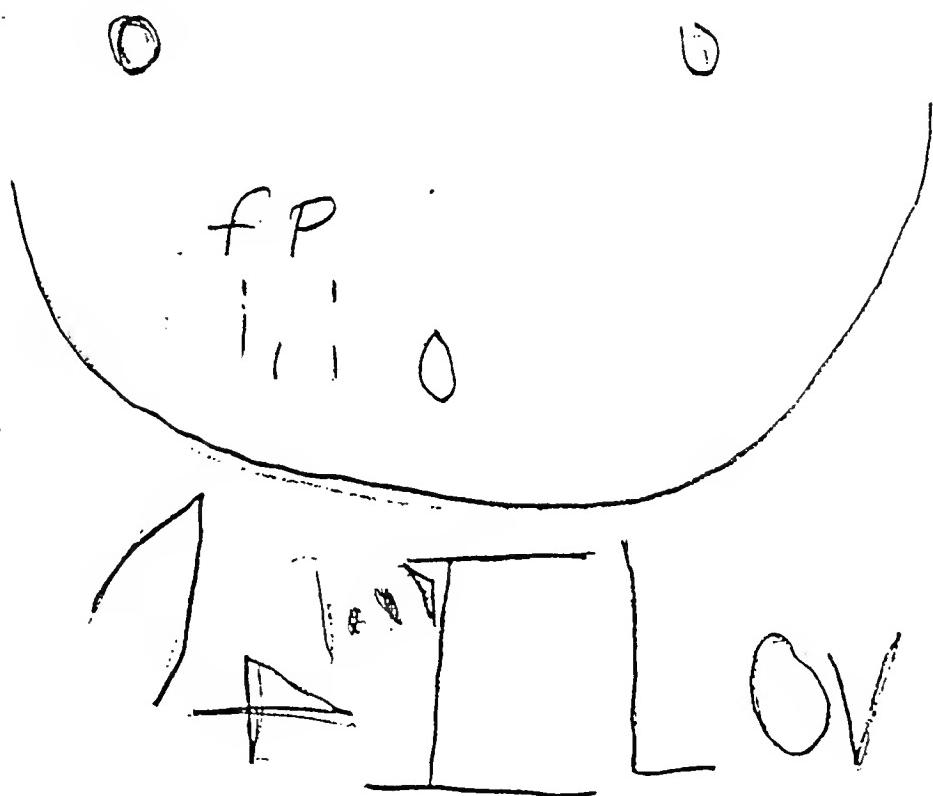


Figure 12. Invented Spellings

children invented their own spellings. Teacher practice also was seen to influence the appearance or disappearance of spelling inventions.

#### Copying

Teachers in this ESL classroom encouraged the use of copying by children and made frequent references to the labels around the room on different centers, shelves, maps, and experience story charts. Both teachers gestured to these items when children asked for spellings of particular words. This was seen by the researcher as a practice aimed at independent writing development.

All of the subjects in the study participated in copying to varying degrees. Four out of the five copied words they needed while writing. Toward the end of the study, a mailbox unit was placed in the back of the room with name tags for each child. The teachers would write a daily note to the students on a small slip of paper and the children were encouraged to write back to the teachers. José wanted to write back immediately when he received his note and often used copying as one of his composing behaviors. The following episode demonstrated the copying strategy, as well as asking for dictation as he wrote two different notes:

José:

I want to say, Dear Mrs. Path, my mother is sick. I can not go to Miami. José.

Mrs. Path: (Takes dictation of the above note onto a small strip of unlined yellow paper.)

José: I want to write back right now.

Mrs. Path: Okay. Do you need some paper?

José: Yes, some little yellow kind like this (big smile and points to teacher's note to him).

Mrs. Path: Oh, here's some paper.

(José goes to mailboxes and copies off the names of the teachers two notes. His notes say 'José Love Mrs. Summer' and 'José Love Mrs. Path'.)

Another subject used words in the environment, as well as words and phrases from her friends' writings. On the day preceding Pen Pal Day, on which letters would be shared with another ESL class in another school, Teresa used her friends' work as a model for her partly copied letter. In this instance, teacher practice differed from standard practice in that the teacher wanted this to be a personal communication from the individual child. Mrs. Path expressed her disapproval in the following excerpt from the field note record:

Mrs. Summer: Can you work at this table? If you want to work at a quieter table, you can work over there at the wooden table.

Teresa: Okay. (Both Yolanda and Teresa move to a table by themselves and continue writing.)

Teresa: (As she writes, she reads it to herself.) I am from Venezuela. I would like to know your telephone number. I speak Spanish. Que? [What?]

Yolanda: (Helps her read the letter.)

Teresa: I speak Spanish. I---I---fr--fr-- from V-V---Venezuela. (Looks up at map on chalkboard tray and copies off Venezuela, then looks at Yolanda's paper to get the correct spelling of another word.) Venezuela, it has a zeta [z]! I mean a z. I go to the swimming pool. (She reads off Yolanda's paper which is across the table therefore reading upside down.)

Teresa: (Looks down at her paper then adds an apostrophe and m to her first word making it I'm) I change it to 'I'm' (still standing as she looks over her work and reads Yolanda's letter, upside down, again. Then covers her paper and begins writing a new sentence.)

(During this, Mrs. Path says aloud and within hearing distance of the researcher):

Mrs. Path: Those girls are copying each other's letters. (She points in their direction.)

Teresa: Ut aw (to indicate "No we're not," as she covers her own paper).

Note: Yolanda doesn't notice the teacher's comment and continues to write her letter uninterrupted. Teresa covers her work; still looks at Yolanda's paper as if to get ideas but is careful to cover her eyes and work so she isn't discovered again.

In all other writing episodes, copying occurred as a one- or two-word help from the chalkboard or word cards or labels around the classroom.

#### Body Language

Body language during writing was noted in all writing sessions and appeared to be used by the children to get

comfortable, express frustration or joy, to make meaning without speaking. Body language was defined as body positioning, hand movements, feet movements, sound effects and facial expressions accompanying writing. From the field note protocols, the following examples illustrate the kinds of body language observed:

Joseé: I gonna put my note here. (motions behind mailboxes)

Joseé: Okay. (rubbing his hands together as she reads his note)

Joseé: Yeah! (a loud booming voice)

Joseé: Small one. (Feet bounding as he covers his words with his elbow.)

Jesús: That's your note. (He hands it to Mrs. Summer then grabs it and runs to the mailbox.)

Jesús: Now you can look in your mailbox! (He points to where he has put his finished note to Mrs. Summer.)

Jesús: Your son are in the---your son 'n''n' (makes the 'n' sound as he types). Sound 'd' (makes the 'd' sound and sings to himself a bit) say what? Now question mark, because the next day is a weekend.

Jesús: Yeah, he run. I'll put list. (He looks at screen, scratches his head and types LIST).

Joseé: Yeah, I see a big boat! (His eyes get big and he motions with his arms 'so big'.)

Marco: (Looks up at ceiling; rubs pencil on the table and watches Mrs. Summer as she writes her letter; smiles and chews on his eraser.)

Marco: I don't known how to write this.  
(Erases all of his 10 words.)

Teresa: (Head down on the desk writing away. Changes seats. Turns her paper over then crumples it up and takes a new sheet. Hums a little song.)

Teresa: Oh, that's too bad. I guess I go later. (makes her face into a sad frown)

Yolanda: (Stands right next to Mrs. Summer and rubs her on the arm while Mrs. Summer is reading.)

Yolanda: Okay? (lifts her shoulders like maybe).

Body language was interpreted as a way in which children with limited English finished sentences, added to their verbal interactions, or expressed their pleasure or grief in the classroom context.

#### Prewriting

The teachers in this study believed in presentation of the lesson and followup by writing. Depending on the lesson, the teachers usually introduced a lesson and then planned what might be a followup with their group. If they were cooking, for example, they had a discussion on the ingredients for "Stone Soup" and wrote down the recipe. A followup would include a note to parents, children's recipe writing, and making the soup. The steps in prewriting or planning to write were modeled for children.

The practices of the teachers appeared in the subjects' preparations for writing. Usually the prewriting

consisted of an oral communication of interaction or a one-line statement of what would be written. Other subjects asked questions about what to write or how to write it. Still other children got ready to write via a series of silent prewriting behaviors, as in this example from a letter writing exercise:

Teresa: (Starts to write. Then she moves to another seat. Looks through some letter cards. Shows them to Yolanda. Drops them on the table. Turns her paper over. Drops one sheet of paper on the floor. Starts writing again on a clean sheet of paper.)

Most of the subjects planned their writing with a statement or a question and discussed this with the teachers. The children were not observed to plan writing with their group members. In the following example, Jesús was beginning a story as a followup to a story read aloud, Gulliver's Travels:

Mrs. Summer: Jesús, you can work on your story with me. What sentence will you start with?

Jesús: I want to say . . . (inaudible but begins to write and Mrs. Summer sits right next to him and waits for questions.)

Much of what was termed prewriting in this study was influenced by teachers' practice. In all but two episodes, teachers preceded the child in asking what they would write about, how they would start the writing. This questioning is illustrated in the above example as well as 22 other

writing starts noted in the field note protocols. It was apparent that the children in this study planned their wording, but only with teacher model or assistance.

#### Concealing Writing

Four of the five subjects of this study were secretive about their writing while their writing was in progress. In different writing episodes, these same subjects covered their work, asked that onlookers not look at it, or wrote privately, apart from the group, apparently to keep their writing hidden until finished. Mrs. Summer noted this in the formal teacher interview, as the following excerpt illustrates:

Mrs. Summer: Yes, Jesús never wanted me to see what he was writing until . . . he wanted to put it in my mailbox . . . deliver it . . . he didn't want me to see it from the time he started writing until it was delivered.

Researcher: Yes, I noticed that also--this hiding kind of . . . behavior.

Mrs. Summer: Yeah. Yeah, and Marco didn't ever do his notes in the ESL classroom . . . he'd take them to his regular classroom and bring the answer back during the day sometime.

Researcher: So he made two trips back to the ESL room?

Mrs. Summer: Yeah, to deliver his answer in person.

Individual children handled this concealment in different ways. During one writing episode, Jesús was copying a note he had composed on the computer, and the researcher just

happened to be nearby. Jesús was very adamant about covering his work as this example noted:

(Jesús sets up the computer and is ready to write.)

Jesús: How do you spell 'air conditioned'?

Mrs. Summer: Do you want 'air conditioning' or 'air conditioned'?

Jesús: The first one.

(Mrs. Summer goes to the chalkboard and writes 'air conditioning'.)

Researcher: (goes to look at the note)

Jesús: No, don't read!

Researcher: Can I read it later?

Jesús: You can read it when Mrs. Summer reads it.

Researcher: Oh, good!

Jesús: Mrs. Summer, how do you spell questions?

On another occasion, the same subject was sitting near the teacher. The group consensus that day was that everyone wanted to write a letter to someone they missed. Mrs. Summer was writing a letter, as were Marco and Jesús. The concealment of writing occurred in a different way, as this excerpt relates:

Mrs. Summer: I'm going to write a letter to someone in San Francisco.

Jesús: (Puts head on left arm and is writing with right hand. His tongue seems to help him along because it is out a bit.)

Jesus: (Looks at Mrs. Summer's writing, then goes back to his.) Don't see mine yet. (He does not want her to look at his yet.)

Mrs. Summer: Oh. I'm not looking.

Jesus: I finished.

Mrs. Summer: On, that's great Jesus. (Pats him on the back.)

Jesus: I don't have a letter in my mailbox. Look at your mailbox. (He yells across the room to Mrs. Summer.)

Mrs. Summer: Oh, oh.

Jesus: Open José's first! (quite excited and in a loud voice)

Mrs. Summer: Oh, Jesús.

Jesus: Yes. (He says with a big smile as he goes to the computer to help José.)

Mrs. Summer: (She sits down and reads her letter from Jesus. Then goes over to him and thanks him for the note.) I will answer it tomorrow.

Other children covered their work with their hands or an elbow until they had finished the work. Once the writing was finished, they shared it readily with teachers or each other. Marco rarely wrote in class and his concealment was interpreted differently from just covering his work. The writing he did in ESL class was mainly brief captions, labels, or phrases. The writing he did outside of class, either at home or in his regular classrooms but written for someone in ESL class, was intricate and lengthy. He seemed to enjoy the surprise of presenting a message, finished,

and appeared to prefer writing in private. He also had some unique delivery strategies, one of which is described by Mrs. Summer in the following segment from the observational record:

Mrs. Summer: (to researcher). You want to read Marco's note? It has some very heavy parts but it is from his heart! (She looks at me sadly and hands me his note.)

Researcher: Oh, (frown) he was really into some computer notes today.

Mrs. Summer: Well, yesterday he wrote an early note in class and asked if he could throw a note in the door on his way to the lunchroom. Then he threw in a long letter which he had written in his regular class--the one you're going to read.

Various forms of concealment of writing in progress were demonstrated throughout the study. It was apparent in each case that, when the product was completed, sharing the writing with others was the next step.

#### Writing Play

The teaching practice in this classroom included presenting to the children many forms of the written word. In this way, children saw the numerous possibilities and uses of the written word. From letters home, personal letters, recipes, labels, booklets, stories, diaries, thank-you notes to rhymes, children got the idea that writing can be used in many ways.

'Writing play' was a term used to describe some attempts by children in this class to communicate in novel

ways. In some instances, very new writers would decorate with symbols that they had not mastered as yet, but which they knew had meaning for writing. These occurrences often followed a drawing, to which was added lots of punctuation marks and decorations, as in figure 13.

More elaborate play writing was observed in Marco's secret code messages to Mrs. Summer. Occasionally, some Spanish was noted as well as English words that appeared along with the code but always apart from the message which was coded as in the example in figure 14.

All of the subjects engaged in writing play as they wrote or as a finishing touch. They tended to use writing play on personal communications, and it did not appear on assigned written tasks.

#### Oral-Language Functioning

Confirmation questions. In this classroom, great care was taken to listen to children's speech messages and to clarify what was meant. Two ways in which teachers facilitated this were allowing all types of questions and allowing children to use Spanish and English and/or a mixture in order to make themselves understood.

Is this right? A common form of confirmation question was interpreted as (1) the child seeking clarification or (2) the child seeking clearance to proceed especially during writing. These confirmation questions asked by

Dear Mavricio  
I'm from venezuela  
I wāt your Telfone  
nōbr I like to  
play ball  
My Telfone  
is 3

Figure 13. José's Writing Play

CODE (4 on 4)



A	B	C	D	F	G	H	I	J	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
4	8	12	16	20	24	28	32	36	40	49	48	52	56	60	64	68	70	76
V	X	Z	W	Y	K	!	?	.	,	E								
\$	0	89	88	92	96	100	104	109	132	126	120							

## MENNSAGE

96, 50, 76 / 100, 48, 52, 92 / 18 48, 120, 12, 60  
16, 120, 104.

32 / 92, 32, 40, 90 / 56, 76, 72, 168, 52, 44, 120 /  
44, 52, 64, 120 / 40, 120, 40, 70, 100, 64, 68 /  
92, 32, 70, 28 / 72, 28, 32, 68 / 12, 52, 16, 120 /

8, 96, 109

PS: / means inside is one word.  
PS: I forgot the E (sorry)

Figure 14. Marco's secret code

students indicated to the teachers that a comment, instruction, or warm touch was necessary as the next step in the writing process for a particular child. Jesús was particularly interested in writing on the computer both at home and at school. One day, while copying a program from an Apple II computer notebook, he asked the following confirmation questions:

Jesús: Hey, Mrs. Summer, I have it wrong or what? I typed all that. What I do?

Mrs. Summer: Does it tell you to type RUN?

Jesús: Yes.

Mrs. Summer: Well then type RUN.

Jesús: It just says, ok?  
OK it goes.

Another example of a confirmation question related to clearance to proceed was asked when Mrs. Summer had introduced a mailbox unit in which the teachers would write to the students each day and the students could write back. Marco, whose practice it was to think about a situation and then return a simple question, reacted by returning to the ESL classroom late in the day and asking:

Marco: Mrs. Summer, I can ask you questions in the note?

Mrs. Summer: (Taken aback because she was involved in another group and lesson.) You mean the note you will write me?

Marco: Yes.

Mrs. Summer: Oh, I love questions. Maybe you could tell me something about you as well, okay?

Marco: Okay! (He smiles a big grin and leaves.)

These types of questions served the purpose for students of confirming what was asked (language function) or gave clearance to the child to take the next step in writing. Confirmation questions were asked repeatedly by three of the five subjects while writing or upon completion of a writing task.

Talking while writing. Quiet students writing at their desks were not the norm in this classroom, and both teachers believed in verbal interaction during all activities--at times the noise level may have disturbed some observers; however, most of the noise was related to busy writers making statements, asking questions, and moving about to get their ideas on paper.

All of the children in this study engaged in talk while writing. Talk was most typically related to the writing, although in six instances, unrelated comments were noted. The children in this study talked about their writing in Spanish and English and frequently mixed Spanish and English. In the following excerpt from the field notes, Jesus was writing all the words he knew in list fashion on the computer and demonstrated his talk related writing:

Mrs. Summer: Try 'NEW' and 'RUN'.

Jesus: Yeah, he run. I'll put list. (He looks at the screen, scratches his head, and types 'LIST'.)

Mrs. Summer: See it lists your commands--it's not running them. Why is it not running them?

Jesus: I don't know.

Mrs. Summer: Does it tell you to type just 'run'?

Jesus: Yes, I type 'run'. (He types run into the computer and watches the screen.)

Jesus: It just says 'okay'.

Mrs. Summer: Its' not running them and I'm not sure why. We'll have to figure out why.

Jesus: Oh (with a whining voice).

In another writing episode, Mrs. Summer had delivered messages to each child in her group, and the children were just coming into the ESL room for the day. In this example from the writing protocols, José had just discovered his note (figure 15):

José: Mrs. Summer, look another letter! (José comes running up to her with a note from his mailbox.)

Mrs. Summer: Yes, honey (touches his shoulder). A note! How exciting! (big smile in her eyes)

José: I want to read it! (He is so thrilled; smiles and tries to read it to her.)

Mrs. Summer: Okay.

Dear J

5/21/84

What did you  
do this week-end?  
Did you go somewhere?  
I went to the  
beach at St. Augustine  
and had a good  
time. I saw some  
very beautiful boats  
called yachts.

Love,  
Mrs. S

Figure 15. Mrs. Summer's note to José

Jose: Dear José . . . what (tries very hard, word by word sounding it out.)

Mrs. Summer: Dear José, what did you do this weekend, it says. (She intervenes when he is stuck.) Let me read the whole letter to you. [figure 15]

Jose: I went to the beach and then my grandmother did not know the beach and I do, she goes . . . (makes a hand motion like his grandmother was excited.)

Mrs. Summer: Oh, that's great.

Jose: I like the water and to swim.

Mrs. Summer: Well you know what José? This says that I went to the beach on Saturday. I went to the beach at St. Augustine and got in the water, too.

Jose: Me, too.

Mrs. Summer: And it says I saw some very beautiful boats called yachts. Have you heard the word yates?

Jose: Yeah, I see a big boat. (His eyes get big and he motions so big with his hands.)

Note from researcher: This is the most talking I've seen Jose do all semester. The most complete sentences in English and only one word of translation from Mrs. Summer.

Personal communications from teacher to students appeared to have a significant effect on the subjects' responses in writing. All of the subjects responded with verbal communications about these letters, and this would carry over into talk while writing their responses.

Asking questions while writing. All of the subjects asked questions while writing. In the initial stages of the research, translation questions were the most frequent as can be seen in this sequence:

Mrs. Summer: (taking dictation) I like to write to my grandmother and to my aunt.

José: Sí, me gusta escribir a mi abuela ya mi tía. [Yes, I like to write to my grandmother and my aunt.]

Mrs. Summer: What else would you like to write?

José: Me gusta hablar por teléfono con mis amigos.

Mrs. Summer: Try it in English. I like to talk to my friends on the telephone.

José: I like to talk to my friends on the telephone.

Later in the study, questions during writing centered on word finding and spelling helps. Teacher practices came into play here, as for the majority of cases, correct spelling was emphasized, although toward the end of the study, a noted decrease in correcting spelling errors was apparent as discussed in the invented spellings section.

Jesús: How do you spell 'air conditioned'? (Calls to Mrs. Summer from the computer.)

Mrs. Summer: Do you want 'air conditioning' or 'air conditioned'?

Jesús: The first one.

(Mrs. Summer goes to the chalkboard and writes air conditioning.)

Researcher: (goes to look at the note)

Jesus: No, don't read.

Researcher: Can I read it later?

Jesus: You can read it when Mrs. Summer reads it.

Researcher: Oh, good.

Jesus: Mrs. Summer, how do you spell questions?

Mrs. Summer: What honey? I can't hear you with these earphones on.

Jesus: I know.

Mrs. Summer: Do you know, Marco? Can you help him?

(Marco moves to the computer table and helps Jesus spell the word questions.)

The subjects in this study required assistance with their writing and they used questions to get help. José and Teresa were the most verbal children and, not surprisingly, asked the most questions. Asking questions and getting immediate responses seemed to facilitate the writing process for these children.

Statements about writing. Teacher practice naturally supported comments and statements about writing. In this classroom, teachers were concerned with modifying an assignment to fit the interests of the child and used their statements about writing as a guide to change the activity or help children make a start.

Statements about writing were divided into two subcategories: positive comments and negative comments. Negative comments about writing were interpreted by the

researcher as a way to signal confusion or lack of understanding, as in the following excerpt from the field notes:

(In this example, José is trying the computer for the first time. Mrs. Summer is encouraging him.)

Mrs. Summer: You can't run it this way.  
(Explains it first in Spanish and then in English.) What do you want to write?

José: I don't know.

Mrs. Summer: Why don't you write words you know?

José: I want 'pig'.

Mrs. Summer: You want 'pig' or 'big'?

José: 'Pig'.

Mrs. Summer: Type 'P--i--g'.

(This continues until he has typed a list of words he knows.)

An analysis of the protocols revealed that subjects made 21 negative statements. Examples of these negative statements extracted from the field note record are:

I dunno.

I don't know the word farmyard.

I don't know.

Don't send me letters.

I don't want letters.

I don't.

No se cómo hacerlo. [I don't know how to do it.]

I don't know how in English to write.

These comments were interpreted as expressing a need for

help or clarification. These negative statements, in every case, were followed by teacher facilitation which included encouragement, clarification, acceptance, and assistance with the next step in writing.

The field note record had 34 positive statements about writing, and these data were matched with an equal number of positive teacher statements. The following was extracted from the field note record and illustrates the facilitative nature of the teacher's positive statements about writing:

<u>Subjects</u>	<u>Teachers</u>
I finished.	Maybe you could tell me something about you as well.
I need help with the writing.	Do you need some paper?
I can translate songs into English or Spanish.	Let me write your name on it so you don't lose it.
I want to say. . . .	Sounds good to me.
I write because in the phone they no talk.	I think they will like that.
Yeah he run (computer). I'll put list.	It's not running. We'll have time to figure out why.
I know I can write back.	Great!
I can make a note and I know what to say.	Yes, you can write a message. Each person will have a box.
I want to say 'Dear Mrs. Path'.	Do you want to write me a note?
I want to write back right now.	Here, I'll help you.
I can ask questions in the note?	Oh, I love questions.

By far, the subject statements most frequently noted were 'I finished' and 'I want to write. . . . ', which are simple statements interpreted to mean 'what comes next' and 'help is required'.

Taking breaks. Teachers encouraged verbalization in this classroom and a pattern had been set in oral-language lessons. If a child wanted to add to a discussion or tell about something, teachers were always encouraging. These off-the-subject breaks, it was felt, were meaningful to children and strengthened oral language and social interaction among group members.

These off-the-subject breaks were also noted during composing. Occasionally, the children would take a break from their writing and chat with each other or talk about something personal they wanted to share with the teacher or the group. In the following example, Jesús had written a computer story and another child pushed the erase button. Jesús was typing again when the teacher commented:

Mrs. Summer: I want you to see this. (Uncovers a printer to the computer.) As soon as we learn to use this, we can type on the computer and print it out here, okay?

Jesús: Okay. My father has this.

Mrs. Summer: What kind?

Jesús: An Apple IIe.

Mrs. Summer: Oh, an Apple IIe. That's great. I knew you'd like the printer. I will work on getting the printer set up.

Jesús was the most active verbalizer of the group and interacted the most with Mrs. Summer. He shared the happenings at home and often had to discuss notes to take home for his brother who was also in ESL. Other subjects who took breaks were Yolanda and Teresa. These breaks while writing were mainly social-interaction times and were often inaudible and mostly in Spanish. When they wrote as a team at the small book table, they tended to verbalize off task; however, when they wrote with teachers their verbalizations were related to their writing. The following example was a copying and coloring exercise, where Yolanda and Teresa were working by themselves on pages of a nursery rhyme book. Their unrelated talk is mainly inaudible.

(Teresa and Yolanda have moved to the small book table to avoid Bobby who was bothering them.)

Teresa: Y, aquí hay un períco. [Y, here is a little bird.]

Yolanda: "Tio toro" en Venezuela.  
[Children's song in Venezuela.]

(Both Yolanda and Teresa are busy coloring, cutting and labeling a ditto of Little Miss Muffet. They chat in Spanish about what they will do after school.)

Teresa: Tu tienes qué hacerlo. [You have to do this.]

Yolanda: No quiero. [I don't want to.]

Taking breaks while writing occurred exclusively with Jesús, Teresa, and Yolanda. Marco and José verbalized about their writing while composing. Taking breaks was also interpreted as a behavior which occurred with the more verbal members of the study.

#### Children's Views of Writing

According to the social interactionist perspective, individuals assign meaning to the things of their world through their interactions in social contexts (Bondy, 1984). In the social context of the classroom, children's entering views of writing, their developmental writing levels, and teacher practices interact to produce changes in initial perceptions of writing. In other words, children's views of writing can be altered and influenced by the interaction of children and teachers.

In the present study, the context was conducive to teachers working individually or in very small groups (one teacher to three to five children) by nature of ESL instructional plan. This fact contributed to the impact of teacher practices in this setting. Teachers were able to provide individual and immediate feedback to children which is different from other classroom contexts because of the larger numbers of students per teacher. Children were able to interact with their teachers and their peers while writing. This interactive context influenced incoming

views of writing. Several views of writing were discovered in this study of five bilingual young writers. Each child in the study was considered to be at a different developmental level although the oldest subjects had characteristics at similar levels. José initially drew only pictures and printed occasional letters in his drawings. Teresa and Yolanda wrote two- and three-word sentences, such as, "I like to play," "My name is . . . , " or "I go to . . . ." Yolanda and Teresa were classified as stage three writers according to Forrester's (1980) developmental writing scale, whereas, José was a stage two writer--one letter spellings. The two older subjects had far greater written vocabularies and were reported to have been fluent writers in their native countries. In Forrester's (1980) scale, they were functioning at levels five and six of writing development--acquired rules, phonetic spellings, and accurate spellings. Teachers viewed these writers differently. In describing these subjects during initial interviews, these teacher comments were recorded:

José doesn't know how to write yet. He is really motivated to learn English, but he probably won't write at all . . . just draw pictures.

The girls really like pencil and paper activities. They copy back and forth and are always asking for different words. They both write very neatly.

Jesús is always talking, but he can write. He likes to write best on the computer. Now with Marco, he really doesn't participate much but he

does his work in writing, social studies, and spelling, in bilingual classes. Marco is having the most difficulty in learning English. He doesn't talk much.

Researchers have pointed out the significant impact of teacher practices on student perceptions (Mosenthal, 1983; Roth, 1980). In this study, an emergent question was what effect did teachers' views of individual writers have on these children?

#### Younger Writers

Observation and interview data from the younger children revealed that each of these children thought writing was important. None of these children, however, related the purposes of writing to school. Each of these younger writers viewed writing as important in writing letters to friends and family members--writing for communication. The following field note excerpt demonstrated the view of writing for communication:

Researcher: When you're at home, what types of things do you write?

Yolanda: Like stories and things and letters to my grandmother.

Researcher: You write letters to your grandmother?

Yolanda: Yes

Researcher: Ok, I bet she loves it when she gets letters from you.

Yolanda: Yes! (loudly and with assurance)

During, Teresa's formal interview she also confirmed this purpose for writing as well as her writing level:

Researcher: What types of things do you write? Que cosas escribistes?

Teresa: Umm. Like I like you.

Researcher: Ok, ok. You could write I like you. Anything else?

Teresa: Yes, sometimes.

Researcher: Sometimes?

Teresa: I make letters to my grandmother when she was sick.

Researcher: Oh that's neat.

Both Yolanda and Teresa stated in their interviews that they wrote letters at home and that writing generally involved their parents or their teachers.

José reported in his interview that he did not know how "to write, yet" but he drew pictures and mailed them to his grandmother in Costa Rica. The following excerpt from an interview illustrates his view of drawing as written communication:

Researcher: Do you ever write letters to or draw pictures for anyone?

José: Yeah.

Researcher: Quién? [who?]

José: I don't know how to write more or less.

Researcher: Ah huh, Y algunas veces debuyas tu? [sometimes, you draw, right?]

José: Yeah! (with a loud voice)

Researcher: A quién? Hay una persona especial? [To whom? Is there a special person?]

José: Sí. [Yes]  
 Mi abuelita. Oh mi tía, mi tía.  
 [To my grandmother and to my aunt.]

José: Ellas viven en Costa Rica y yo  
 estoy aquí! [They live in Costa  
 Rica, and I am here!]

In the early stages of the study, many of the writing episodes began with a teacher presentation and a followup writing session where teachers worked with two to five children assisting them with their writing. Standard procedure included prewriting or planning, helping with spelling or ideas to get started. On several occasions, the teachers gave one or two lines of dictation which children then copied or typed onto the computer. A view of writing which included teacher input for help with planning and spelling can be documented with each of these younger emergent writers. These three younger writers appeared to hold a view that, writing usually involves a teacher or a buddy and involves getting the individual words "neatly" on the paper. Observational data demonstrate this view of writing in the following example from the field note record:

José: What does this say? I need help!

Mrs. Summer: It says: "I'm so glad you had a nice weekend. What will you do after school today?"

José: Can you write you back? I don't know how to in English!

Mrs. Summer: Then how about in Spanish.

Jose: I don't know how in Spanish to write.

Mrs. Summer: Then maybe you'll think of another way to answer my note.

Jose: OK? Maybe you help me?

Mrs. Summer: Do you want to write, me?

Jose: Yeah! (loud voice)

Mrs. Summer: Here, I'll help you (and takes his note from dictation).

Each of these writers appeared reluctant to write on his/her own. Yolanda and Teresa wrote side-by-side in 90 per cent of all observations and José predictably chose Mrs. Summer as his partner when he wrote. While drawing his pattern, he was more solitary and he liked to complete his drawing before sharing it.

Toward the end of the study, when teachers implemented the mailbox dialog with daily notes to children, writing became more frequent. Writing became a daily occurrence for each of these children and José began to write one phrase messages using only invented spellings. Yolanda and Teresa began to write both teachers (some letters presented earlier as figures 3 and 4) and other friends in other classes. These children appeared to be writing, toward the study's end, for communication within the classroom. They answered the questions asked by notes from teachers, gave information about themselves and their families, and/or asked more questions as Mrs. Summer indicated in an interview about the mailboxes:

Mrs. Summer: I found that my note writing changed in the process. In the beginning, it was sort of stiff and unnatural. As we got into it, and I got responses from the children, I felt like it was a real letter writing exchange. I found that the questions I asked the kids prompted them into a response.

Researcher: So you feel like the messages changed from initial notes you wrote? Was it a subject matter change or a length of note change?

Mrs. Summer: Yes, I think definitely. We started off writing notes on small strips of paper, and then I went to lined paper. By the time the mailboxes were in full swing, I was writing on a small sheet of lined paper front and back!

Researcher: And the children's paper changed also?

Mrs. Summer: Now they seem to be writing on both sides of the paper. Much more writing and longer notes. I think its interesting because they have started asking me questions and they want me to answer specifically.

A shift toward writing for communication at school appeared in the daily notes, longer notes, and the increase in independent non-teacher involvement in the written responses of these three subjects.

#### Older Writers

In the early weeks of this study, the two older subjects, Jesus and Marco, were observed mainly writing on the computer. Since they attended ESL at the same time, they normally took turns at the computer. Since

developmentally these children were more in control of the writing process, teachers allowed more freedom in their written follow-up to oral-language lessons. Observational and interview data suggested that Jesús and Marco were fascinated with writing on the computer. Both of these children began stories on the computer and frequently helped each other with finding words or getting the computer to work. Both of these subjects reported in their interviews that they wrote in their native languages (Spanish and Portuguese) before coming to the United States. They normally wrote in cursive and wrote fluently with little teacher involvement except for word translations or spellings. From interview data, their views of writing as a solitary activity are seen:

Researcher: Do you have a place in your house where can write?

Marco: Yes, in my bedroom.

Reseacher: And if you had to do homework, could you do it there?

Marco: Yeah. Every day I do it there. 'Cause' I have one brother and one sister and they are loud too much.

Researcher: Is there any other type of writing you do?

Marco: Yeah, I have a big friend in Brazil.

Researcher: Um hum.

Marco: Yeah, my best friend. I write to him and he write me back.

Jesús revealed that his mother taught him to write and that both his parents write "a lot" at home. When questioned about what and where he wrote, Jesús responded he wrote at home in a special place:

Jesús: The letters I write in the computer. Because my father has an Apple II-e.

Researcher: Anything else?

Jesús: After the lunch [dinner] I do the homework.

Researcher: Does your mom or dad help with that?

Jesús: My mom help to do the homeworks, the spelling.

Researcher: So, you write homework and you write letters. Anything else?

Jesús: No, I don't like to writing.

Researcher: You don't like it. Well, how important do you think it is?

Jesús: Very important. Because in the phone no one talks. [Letters bring more information than phone calls?]

Researcher: What?

Jesús: I write to my primo [cousin].

Researcher: Oh, you write to your cousin.

Jesús: Yeah, I write to him, because yes, vive en Colombia [he lives in Colombia].

From these excerpts and the observational record, a sense that Jesús and Marco had additional functions and purposes for writing in addition to writing as communication was noted. Both indicated that writing was

important in regard to school and their assignments. Both stated that good writers needed to study "a lot."

Both Jesús and Marco wrote independently in the classroom. When the mailbox dialog began, Marco became a daily correspondent with Mrs. Summer. His writings contained lots of questions, artwork, and some mixing of manuscript with cursive writing. His only questions were related to spellings, and these questions were infrequent since he wrote mainly at a desk apart from the group or in his regular classroom.

Jesús' writings during the last weeks of the study were less frequent although longer than the short sentence stories or assignments observed prior to the mailbox intervention. Jesús asked for help with words and spellings from Mrs. Summer, although he maintained his distance usually writing on his own in a carrel or at the computer. Jesús did not draw and customarily wrote in cursive. When he answered a note from Mrs. Summer, he occasionally wanted to copy it on the computer as the following field note excerpt illustrates:

Jesús: Now you can look in your mailbox!  
(He points to where he has put his finished note to Mrs. Summer.)

Mrs. Summer: OK, that's a great idea!

Jesús: My note, let me write it on the computer.

Mrs. Summer: Sounds good to me.

Jesus: How do you spell 'air  
conditioned'? (Calls to Mrs.  
Summer from the computer.)

Mrs. Summer: (She goes to the chalkboard and  
writes 'air conditioned'.)

Jesus: Mrs. Summer, how do you spell  
questions?

Mrs. Summer: What, honey? I can't hear you with  
the earphones on.

Marco: I know, I'll help.

Mrs. Summer: OK.

(Jesus gets help from Marco as he is typing his  
note on the computer and then sets it up to  
print.)

Both Jesus and Marco viewed themselves as being able  
to write and communicate a message. They had control over  
the mechanics of the process and viewed writing as  
important to learn things in school and to communicate  
their ideas.

In this study, the two girls who entered this  
classroom with home-oriented views of writing for  
communication appeared to be influenced by teacher practice  
which encouraged them to work with a buddy, get words on  
paper, and later write meaningful messages at school. The  
one child who was not "writing" at the beginning of the  
study appeared to be highly influenced by the interaction  
of teacher practice and his motivation to communicate  
verbally and in writing. José initially viewed writing as  
something he could not do. In the final month of the  
study, José was writing his own messages daily.

The older subjects and developmentally advanced writers did not appear to alter their incoming views of writing since they possessed considerable experience with writing as communication in other school settings and in their homes. Certainly, the frequency of their writing increased and personal meaning expressed in their messages indicated greater involvement in the writing process for expression rather than the school-oriented completion of assignments view both these subjects ascribed to initially.

#### Summary

In this chapter, the 12 composing behaviors utilized by five bilingual children were described. Some of these composing behaviors were shared by all the children. For instance, invented spellings and writing play were used by all children in 90 percent of the writing episodes. Other composing behaviors were specific to certain subjects of the study. For example, Teresa, Jesús and José were the only children who repeatedly asked confirmation questions. This phenomenon was viewed by the researcher as a strategy used by only the highly verbal subjects. Some questions are yet to be answered: Why were these composing behaviors used by the groups? Why did some children use one behavior and not others?

From the beginning of this study, the classroom was described as a setting for social and verbal interaction.

The writing process and its products were also set in an interactive context. The components of this interaction were the individual students, the groups, and the teachers. The composing behaviors and, hence, the writing process were facilitated by this interactive context.

The teachers' instructional practice was stated preceding each specific composing behavior. Data analysis revealed that many of the composing behaviors reflected the interaction between the students' individual differences, abilities, and perspectives and the teachers' practices.

In this study, the teachers and the children utilized similar and supportive behaviors related to composing. For example, in previous examples, it was shown that both teachers engaged in reading back while writing. If students asked them to dictate or write a word or a phrase, they responded by reading while writing and/or reading the written product back to the child. This finding was true for several other composing behaviors as well, namely, prewriting, writing talk, asking questions, statements and taking breaks. In using a social interactionist perspective, the students' behaviors as described reflected the classroom interactions between teacher and student. In their search for making meaning and communicating, both verbally and in writing, the interaction between teacher practice and student behavior was clear.

Teacher practice in this classroom was clearly matched to eight of the composing behaviors described, yet not all of the children exhibited each of the eight behaviors. Certain children appeared to adopt some composing behaviors but not others. These differences may be explained in terms of individual differences in writing developmental levels, personality, attitudes, and abilities of the children.

Highly verbal children tended to exhibit more oral-language functioning behaviors, such as confirmation questions, asking questions, and writing talk. These subjects' verbal abilities, interfaced with the value teachers placed on verbalizations, promoted writers who were busy asking for help and verbal while writing. These writers wanted to make sure their work was making sense, and they required teacher input to make progress. It appeared that these children viewed writing as a dynamic, changing process with lots of questions and verbalizations. Children who wrote with a friend or with a teacher utilized prewriting and copying strategies 85 percent of the time. These children appeared to need a helper to facilitate the writing process. Their view of writing included getting help from a peer or teacher for beginning ideas or content help during the writing activity. Teachers' practices were congruent with this

view of writing, as they tended to encourage one-to-one writing or writing with a buddy.

The children of this study were highly motivated to learn English. From the beginning of the study, when Spanish was used most frequently, a high level of verbalization was apparent in teacher-student interactions. This value placed by teachers on verbalization set the stage for a continued verbally interactive writing process as the transition was made to English. Children's composing behaviors in this classroom were the products of teacher practice and the children's individual differences, abilities, and attitudes. These behaviors are part of the composing process which was seen in this study as active and verbal. Three of the writers in this study (Teresa, Yolanda and José) appeared less ready for independent writing and chose to write with each other or with a teacher. Their view of writing initially appeared to be one of getting words and phrases on paper. In the final weeks of the study, this view evolved and included independent writing and writing for personal communication. The other two subjects (Jesús and Marco) were more interested in content, wrote longer messages, and, in all but three writing episodes, wrote privately; that is, apart from the group. These writers, the older subjects, were definitely more advanced developmentally and showed more control over the writing process.

The findings of this study gave rise to clear implications for practitioners and for future research with young bilingual children. In the following chapter, these implications and recommendations are discussed.

## CHAPTER VI CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### Summary of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to describe the composing behaviors of five young bilingual children during writing and their perceptions of writing. Research on literacy has focused on writing as a specific set of skills, taught to children by teachers in the classroom. Recently, research in early writing with monolingual children and a few bilingual writing studies has focused on a description of the writers and what they do while they write. This study describes the composing behaviors and the interaction which occurred between children and teachers during writing. Teachers were highly involved in the writing process in this classroom, and this led to a description and analysis of their practices. From these data, perceptions or views that children hold about writing emerged. These perceptions were seen as the meanings children assigned to writing as a result of their interactions in this social context. Specifically, the following questions were addressed by this research:

1. What behaviors accompany the composing processes of young bilingual children? What do children do while they write (i.e., drawing, talking, reading)?
2. How do Spanish-speaking young children view the writing process?
3. What do teachers do while children compose? What are the messages they send to children about writing?
4. What are the types of writing generated in an ESL classroom by students? By the teachers?
5. What is the role of oral language in the composing process? How are the English and Spanish languages used in the composing process?

#### Findings and Conclusions

This study was conducted during the spring semester of 1984 over a four-month period for a total of 145 hours of observations. Interviews were conducted with the children, the teachers and the bilingual teachers, and were audiotaped for later reference. Eighty-five samples of writing were collected as examples from the teachers, students, and other children in the ESL classroom. The data collected documented the children's and teachers' speech messages, their statements about writing, their writing behaviors, and their written products. These data

served as supportive evidence for the composing behaviors and the views of writing held by the children.

The data were analyzed using the developmental research sequence described by Spradley (1980). The written field notes were typed onto protocols which represented one day of observation. From these protocols, data were organized into domains or categories which contained similar information such as: Kinds of Writing Behaviors of the Children, Kinds of Statements about Writing By Children; Kinds of Questions Children Asked about Writing, Types of Writing Protocols of Children, and Personal Communications of Children. Similar domains were organized for teacher behaviors as well. From these domains, taxonomies were constructed which indicated the composing behaviors of individual children. This procedure was carried out for teachers as well. Twelve composing behaviors were identified from these taxonomies:

1. Reading Back--This practice was modeled by both teachers and used by two of the five children studied. For these children, reading back their writing helped them move onto the next step or finalized the statement they had made in writing.
2. Invented Spellings--Invented spellings occurred throughout the study and with all children. Invented spellings were demonstrated most

frequently when children wrote personal messages apart from teacher intervention.

3. Copying--This practice was used by teachers and students alike and appeared across writing products. Teachers employed copying by asking children to copy from the board a word or phrase or copy from a paper a word they had written when the child requested it. Children were observed to use copying for word finding from environmental print or from a buddy's paper, or from a teacher's model.
4. Body Language--In this active social classroom, body language was observed during composing with all subjects. Some examples of body language were foot stamping, head scratching, pencil tapping, and hand rubbing. These behaviors occurred during all composing activities observed.
5. Prewriting--This behavior indicated some forethought or planning associated with writing and was used by three of the five subjects. Teachers tended to use planning in making suggestions for beginning a writing activity. Prewriting was observed only when two children wrote side by side or when one child wrote with the teacher. In other words, prewriting occurred as a miniconference about what was to be written.

6. Concealing Writing--Four of the five subjects employed this behavior. Concealing writing while it was in progress was viewed by the researcher as the child's attempt to work, uninterrupted, and create an independent message. On each occasion, the writing was shared when it was finished.
7. Writing Play--Writing play took many forms and was used by all of the subjects. Much of the writing play was simplistic and served a decorative purpose (i.e., hearts or flowers along with the message or punctuation marks with stars accompanying a short message). More complex examples of writing play were elaborate drawings with messages, many writings had a message or a secret number code in which each number had a corresponding letter.
8. Oral-Language Functioning--A category which included the speech messages generated by children with various functions;  
  
Confirmation questions--These questions appeared in English and Spanish and with three of the five subjects and occurred with the most verbal youngsters, functioning to keep the composing process moving forward.  
  
Talking while Writing--All of the subjects talked while they wrote. The writing process was described as verbal and active, with

Spanish and English being used interchangeably. Teachers supported and encouraged talk during ESL time and continued this practice during composing.

Asking Questions--Questions were observed during every composing activity and by each subject across writing activities. Teacher practice was highly supportive of questions and many questions were modeled by teachers.

Statements about Writing--Each subject was observed to make statements about his/her writing. Generally, they referred to content rather than form (i.e., 'Look at this Mrs. Summer' or 'Read this right now!').

Taking Breaks--Two of the five children were break takers. They were observed to look at the ceiling, talk about a different subject, rest on their arm or watch another activity during their composing activities.

All of the children in this study used the following composing behaviors while writing: inventing spelling, copying, body language, writing play, writing talk, asking questions and statements about their writing. Certain composing behaviors were employed by several children but not by others. For example, confirmation questions were only asked by Teresa, José, and Jesús, but not by Marco and

Yolanda. This was attributed to the high verbalization level of the first group of children. Prewriting occurred only with children who worked with a buddy, like Yolanda and Teresa or with a teacher's direct assistance.

Prewriting was, therefore, seen as being influenced by teacher practice rather than a spontaneous composing behavior.

The second component of this study which emerged from analysis of the data was the impact of teacher practice on the composing behaviors of these children. From the analysis of student composing behaviors and teacher composing behaviors, conclusions were drawn about the teacher practice and children's composing behaviors. It was found that with specific children, teachers used certain composing behaviors consistently and these were seen as highly influential in the writing processes of these subjects. With the beginning writers, Teresa, Yolanda, and José, teachers used prewriting and copying when initiating a writing activity. Teachers appeared to view writing for these children as helping them get started and get words on the paper spelled correctly. As these subjects wrote more personal messages and invented spellings, teachers reduced copying practices and asked these children to spell the words on their own. Teachers stressed getting started and giving words and phrases to all children observed in both groups. The message the teachers wanted to send to the

children was that, planning what to write and writing it was important.

With Jesús and Marco, who were older and more advanced writers, teacher practice was different. Since both of these writers wrote by themselves, or apart from the group, the teacher served as a consultant to ask an occasional question about spelling or translation. Teacher practice appeared more involved with the content of the message since the mechanics of writing were not a problem for Jesús and Marco. Jesús was a slow starter and required teacher intervention to begin, but once on his way he wrote his own messages, stories, letters with only occasional questions to get confirmation or clarification to proceed. With Jesús and Marco, teacher instructional practice carried the message that these writers were in control of their writing. Their questions or comments were not rejected and this atmosphere may have enhanced their sense of competence as writers.

#### Findings Specific for Bilinguals

This research study was designed to describe what young bilingual children do while they write. A question that was posed along with that description was: Are the composing behaviors any different from those discovered in studies of monolingual writers? It appeared from this study that young bilingual children employed composing

behaviors similar to monolinguals in the following areas: invented spelling, copying, body language, prewriting, writing play, talking while writing, asking questions while writing, taking breaks, and making statements about their writing. These behaviors had been observed in previous writing research (Childers, 1981; Clay, 1975; Graves, 1982; Green, 1984; Read, 1971).

Among these composing behaviors shared by monolingual and bilingual children, several functions of these behaviors were uniquely employed by the children of this study. When children talked while they wrote, they were making the transition to writing by using Spanish phrases to get started writing. This phenomenon also occurred with two other oral language composing behaviors: asking questions and statements about writing. These composing behaviors were characterized by translation speech messages which allowed children to make the transition from talk to writing and/or aid the young bilingual child as a language reinforcer to the written message in progress.

In this study, three composing behaviors were specific for these young bilingual children: reading back, confirmation questions, and concealing writing. With the emergence of these behaviors more questions must be researched by further investigations with bilinguals.

A first question for new research students is whether or not these behaviors recur in other studies of bilingual

young children? A second general question is whether these specific behaviors may be linked to strictly Spanish speakers or are these behaviors related to a broader cultural set of values? (i.e., field dependence behavior).

Some further questions generated by this research and linked to the specific bilingual composing behaviors are:

1. Confirmation Questions--Do young bilingual children ask confirmation questions because of the language difference, or is this phenomenon related to the high verbal abilities of specific bilingual children? Should teachers be more sensitive for these types of questions to insure meanings are clarified?
2. Reading Back--Do bilingual children share or read back their writings to teacher or each other more than beginning monolingual writers? Does age and writing developmental level make a difference here for bilinguals? Do bilingual children repeat their writing aloud or read it back more often than monolinguals to match it to the print? Or are these bilingual children employing both modalities to help them clarify the language?
3. Concealing Writing--Do bilingual children conceal their writing in progress because they view it as a creative work and seek to share it only when the product is finished? Do bilingual children conceal

their writing because they are unsure of the writing or the meaning until the product is completed? Do teachers need to adjust for this behavior in allowing more privacy or other forms of assignments to insure this desire for independent writing? Could this behavior be a cultural trait (i.e., field dependence)?

The nature of qualitative research is such that with data analysis new variables surface which may have an impact on the questions of interest. In this study, young bilingual children's composing behaviors were found to be related to several variables, which included teacher practices, writing developmental levels, personality factors, oral language ability in English and Spanish and the writing context. Further research is necessary in order to define more completely the composing processes and views of writing that bilingual children hold.

#### Relationship of Findings to Previous Studies

Current research on composing with young children has begun to focus on the process rather than students' written products. Research studies are exploring composing behaviors, because researchers are convinced that by studying and understanding the process, insights into teaching practice can be gained. The call for research dealing with the process of composing (Hall et al., 1976)

and the importance of the context in which the writing occurs (Graves, 1981b) was answered in part by this study. Recent studies (Calkins, 1984; Dyson, 1981; Green, 1984; Lamme & Childers, 1983; Smith, 1978) hold the view that written language is actively constructed by the child in a verbal and social context. This dynamic context was described in the present study and had an impact on the composing behaviors of the five bilingual children studied. Since oral language was reported by both teachers to be a central goal of the ESL classroom, verbal interactions were encouraged in all phases of the curriculum. The teachers created a language-rich environment and encouraged oral language in all areas of the curriculum, a practice which is promoted by the research studies on facilitation of the writing process (Graves, 1982; Wanner, 1983).

In a few studies of the teachers' role in influencing children's writings (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Hoffman & McCully, 1984; Hudelson, 1983, 1984) researchers claimed that young children modified their written language, based on the instructions and perceptions of the teacher or parent. The impact of teacher practice and teachers' speech messages on the composing process is described in the current study. Teacher practices appeared to influence students in the following composing behaviors: reading back, copying, inventing spelling, prewriting and talk

while writing. In addition, differential teacher practices used with specific groups of children were linked to children's views of their writing in this study.

In the current study, the five bilingual children were older than the young children studied by most of the composing behavior researchers. Descriptive studies of preschoolers and kindergarteners have produced the bulk of the writing behaviors which characterize young monolingual writers (Childers, 1981; Dyson, 1981; Ferreiro, 1978, 1980; Green, 1984). This study added to the existing research on young writers in incorporating into the study two unique elements: (1) the writers involved were bilingual and older and (2) the writers were in essence beginning writers, because of their recent transition to the English language. For these reasons, the composing behaviors of young monolinguals could be used comparatively.

The composing behaviors which were discovered in this study were found to be similar, with the exception of three behaviors, to characteristics of younger monolingual writers (Childers, 1981; Dyson, 1981; Green, 1984). Bilingual children in this study used composing behaviors similar to monolinguals of a younger age and, again, this may be attributable to the recent transition to a second oral and written language. Only two of the subjects, the oldest children were reported to have written prior to their moves to the United States. Three of the composing

behaviors were specific to these bilingual children: reading back, confirmation questions, and concealing writing. Future research studies must confirm these behaviors in larger bilingual populations and other language groups.

The writers in this study presented two views of writing which appeared to be functions of age, developmental writing levels and their interactions within this context. The younger writers viewed writing as a process that usually involves a teacher and task which involves getting the individual words on the page. Only in the final weeks of the study did these three subjects begin some independent writing and appear to view writing as personal communication which matched their home-oriented view of writing as communication. In this study, the teachers' practices supported this view of writing for these three young writers. For the older subjects, who had reportedly written already in their native languages, a different view of writing emerged. These writers were more concerned with the content of the message and exercised greater control over the mechanisms of writing as previously discussed. Their incoming views of writing persisted throughout the study; however, the frequency of writing and the personal meanings expressed indicated a shift in perceptions about writing. Writing at school appeared to be viewed as meaningful communication. These

composite profiles or general types of writers have been described in studies of young monolingual writers by Genishi and Dyson (1982) and Graves (1975, 1981, 1983). The factors which appeared in their studies were also discussed in the findings of this study: peer interaction, teacher practice, and developmental levels of the writer.

A final conclusion of this study is the pattern noted in the frequency of writing over the length of the study. From analysis of the observations, a clear pattern emerged, which was linked to the addition of the mailboxes and daily message exchange between subjects and teachers. Children wrote more frequently and the length of their messages increased across subjects in the final phases of this study. Teacher practice and meaning-related instructional practice may be cited as having great influence on the writing behavior of these subjects. Dyson (1983) and Lamme and Childers (1981) have similar conclusions, that when children write personal messages or engage in activities in which they are personally and directly involved, their written communication skills are enhanced.

To summarize, the present study reveals the following findings about children's composing behaviors and their views of writing:

1. For this sample, bilingual young children employed the same composing behaviors as younger monolingual writers.

2. These composing behaviors were not shared by all of the subjects, but all of the children used most of the composing behaviors cited.
3. In this study, three composing behaviors appeared to be specific for bilingual children.
4. Teacher practice, in conjunction with student variables, appeared to impact children's composing behaviors as well as the views these children held about writing.
5. Children in this study held views of writing which may be, in part, explained by age, teacher practices, developmental writing levels, and the interactional setting where the writing occurred.
6. When children were encouraged to write personal messages during a three week mailbox dialog intervention, the children in this study appeared to alter their views of writing.
7. For this sample, when children wrote personal messages, their frequency of writing and length of message increased.
8. This study provided detailed descriptions of the composing behaviors and examples of written products, illustrative of the composing process.
9. New variables and questions for further study were generated for future research into the composing process.

ImplicationsFor the Research Community

Researchers interested in the composing behaviors of young bilingual children may use the findings of this study in the following ways: new questions which may be addressed in future studies, new variables which give focus to subsequent research, use of similar methodologies for writing research with bilinguals.

During this study, many questions regarding composing behaviors specific for bilingual children arose and were reported. Other questions about these particular subjects may have explained why these findings occurred. Questions relating to the age and developmental writing levels persisted throughout this investigation. Were specific behaviors age related or related to when writing began for each child? Or were the contexts of writing or the teacher practices a determinant? What would the differences in composing behaviors have been, if the language used most frequently was Spanish instead of English?

Another question suggested in the work of Fillmore (1976) was the question of personality and individual differences. Why did the more verbal children tend to use certain behaviors and the less verbal children tend to employ other composing behaviors? Are there personality factors which influence a particular view of writing? Why

do some children who are keen observers yet less verbal appear to have more control over the writing process?

The question of language facility was a persistent concern of the research. All of the children in this study were highly motivated to learn English, as reported in their personal interviews and teachers' report. What results would be found in this study, if this were not the case? What factors lead to this desire to learn English? The transition from native language to second language literally occurred during the course of this study. What impact does this have on the composing process? Does writing aid these children in thinking and constructing the new system of language that they are acquiring?

Another question suggested by this study is what will be the impact of this particular context on the writing process? In this study, the writing process is characterized as verbally interactive, movement related, and replete with dialog about writing between students and teachers. Is this true in the other contexts for writing, that these children attend? What are the composing behaviors for these children at home? What will they be in their next years of school? Researchers are just beginning to address the issue of context as it relates to composing (Genishi & Dyson, 1984).

Several factors of importance for future researchers attempting an ethnographic methodology merit

consideration. This study was planned with two central considerations in place as a result of information gathered from a pilot study in the fall semester: availability of subjects and amount of daily writing. The researcher had no way of predicting the decline of daily writing which followed in the spring semester or the attrition of two subjects back to South America during the months of the study. The intervention (mailbox dialog) was planned during the last weeks of the study due to this decline in daily writing occurrences.

This study represented the use of a methodology that had its beginnings in composing behavior research with monolinguals (Graves, 1973). More studies of greater numbers of children in various context are needed to produce a complete picture of the writing processes of young bilingual children. The results of this methodology are detailed descriptions which represent the context of classroom processes as they are experienced by teachers and learners. This methodology is suited to this purpose, because it generates the relevant questions and variables for further study.

#### For Practitioners

This study's purpose was to provide a description and analysis that can improve the understanding of what actual learners do while they write in ESL classrooms. The importance of the context and of the interactions between

teachers and students have been documented in this study which, although small in scope, can offer much to teachers, supervisors, and teacher educators.

The detailed descriptions of bilingual children and their struggles to communicate will be recognized by many classroom teachers--language specialists as well as regular classroom teachers. In the context of this study, these learners were seen to be highly influenced by the practices of their teachers and the input of their peers. Teachers may recognize these elements of the interactive process as making great impact on the teaching and learning of writing. The questions investigated in this study and the conclusions drawn emphasize the importance of the teacher's sensitivity and practices on the composing practices, as well as the views of writing which emerged for the children in this study. Looking closely at the composing behaviors of these children and those of the teachers of this study may help practitioners clarify their perspectives and adjust their views of writing to include instructional practices which are compatible with the composing strategies of their students.

The importance of the classroom environment and teacher practices had impact on monolinguals and bilinguals for oral language and writing (Edelsky, 1983; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Hudelson, 1983). The present study complements these findings and may create an awareness for

teachers and teacher supervisors in creating supportive and accepting language-rich environments for the development of literacy.

Teachers serve as models for both oral and written language in their classrooms. The language of choice that teachers use with a young bilingual may be crucial to the child's feelings of acceptance in terms of both oral language functioning and written language construction (Hamayan & Tucker, 1980; Hoffman & McCully, 1984; Legareta, 1977; Thonis, 1977). Although teacher practices in this classroom accepted all attempts to communicate by children, the language of choice was principally English and Spanish was used mainly when a child was experiencing difficulty. It is the hypothesis of the researcher that if Mrs. Summer and Mrs. Path had had evidence that native language usage might facilitate language learning for this population, their practices might have been adapted to include greater usage of L<sub>1</sub> over various contexts of the classroom environment.

Children in this study were described as active and verbal constructors of a new oral language and evidencing the beginning stages of written language. The transition to literacy is aided by language--a language-rich context and practices which encourage child-centered meaningful communication (Calkins, 1983; Chomsky, 1971; Graves, 1981; Harste et al., 1981). The teacher practices in this study

promoted a language-rich environment, with many opportunities toward the close of the study for children to construct their own personal messages. The passive instructional environment of writing skills and children seated, quietly writing is not described by the findings of this study. A rationale for the teachers and supervisors of teachers for literacy development which is active, questioning, and verbally interactive might be drawn from these findings.

The conclusions of this study are tied to oral-language development, teacher modeling, language-rich environments, and a rationale for a verbally interactive environment. A further insight for teachers and their supervisors may be the realization that individual children carry views of literacy just as adults do. These views of literacy are highly affected by the components of a classroom environment, teacher beliefs and practices, and peer interactive personalities, which impinge on the learner. An analytical consideration of young bilingual children's views of writing may indeed facilitate teachers in fostering these children's writing development.

#### Summary

The unique contribution of this study to composing research is that both learner and context are described in

their natural classroom setting during active composing activities.

It has been observed that both children and teachers contributed to the composing behaviors and views of writing discovered. Other variables which need further study have emerged from this research. Further, the fluency and frequency of writing increased, as children move from teacher-directed activities to the daily dialog of meaningful personal messages between teachers and students.

The study raises many more questions than it resolves. Future research on the composing behaviors and views of writing for young bilinguals can bring about understanding for development of teaching and learning environments where literacy will flourish.

## APPENDIX A PROJECT OUTLINE

### I. Questions for Study

- A. What are the composing behaviors that accompany writing with young bilingual children?
- B. What are the views children ascribe to regarding writing?

### II. Methods to Be Used

- A. Researcher to observe weekly during portion of day (field notes to be collected).
- B. Formal and informal interviewing children and teachers.
- C. Audio and video taped sessions during writing or composing sessions.
- D. Researcher's daily diary.

### III. Subjects

- A. Initially the entire class until subjects are chosen. Five to 10 young children will be selected.
- B. Adult interactions with children involved in study.

### IV. Researcher's Role and Observation Schule

- A. Two-three mornings a week for second semester of school.
- B. Function as note taker and attempt to be uninvolved with children until study is well underway.
- C. Ask informal and formal questions to gain understanding of classroom as study progresses.

January 25, 1984

APPENDIX B  
PARENTS' INFORMED CONSENT FORM (SPANISH)

Estimado Padre:

Soy estudiante de pos grado en la Universidad de la Florida y estoy interesada en observar su hijo/a aprendiendo a escribir. Estoy específicamente estudiando al niño bilingüe y sus escrituras para así adquirir una mayor capacidad que me permita ayudar al niño en la transición de una lengua extranjera al Inglés.

Estaré observando el salón de clases de Inglés como segunda lengua (ESL) de su hijo/a en lo que resta del año escolar. Revisare los proyectos de escrituras, trabajos diarios rutinarios y otros materiales de salón de clases. También haré preguntas informales tanto al niño como al profesor y apuntare sus aclaraciones en forma de notas.

Ocasionalmente filmaré pequeños grupos de niños, que me ayudaran a analizar lo que he escrito en estas notas. Estas películas serán vistas solo por mí y serán borradas una vez terminado mi análisis, no serán enseñadas ni usadas en ninguna otra forma.

Su hijo/a será protegido ya que todas las notas van a ser clasificadas sin usar nombres u otro tipo de identificación. No habrá riesgo o beneficio alguno para su hijo a consecuencia de este estudio. Usted y/o su hijo/a tienen todo el derecho de retirar su consentimiento en cualquier momento sin perjudicarle de forma alguna.

No habrá compensación monetaria alguna por participar en este estudio. Si tiene interés en mis resultados estoy dispuesta a compartirlos con usted de acuerdo a su conveniencia.

Le agradeceré inmensamente el permiso para observar el salón de clases de Inglés como segunda lengua (ESL) al cual

su hijo/a asiste y hacerle preguntas relacionadas con las trabajos de escrituras que el o ella hace allí.

Atentamente,

Sharen Halsall  
College of Education  
Early Childhood Education  
392-0751

---

Yo he leído y entiendo el procedimiento trazado anteriormente. Estoy conforme y consiento a mi hijo/a \_\_\_\_\_ para participar en los procedimientos y he recibido una copia de esta descripción.

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Padre/Guardian

---

Relacion al niño

Estoy conforme / No estoy conforme a ser entrevistado a mi conveniencia concerniente a la experiencia y desarrollo de mi hijo en el área de la escritura.

APPENDIX C  
PARENTS' INFORMATION CONSENT FORM (TRANSLATION)

Dear Parents:

I am a graduate student at the University of Florida, and I am interested in observing young children learning to write. I am studying specifically bilingual children and their writings in order to understand more about helping children make the transition from a foreign language to English.

I will be observing your child's ESL Classroom for the rest of the school year. I will be looking at writing projects, daily work, and other classroom materials. I will ask informal questions of the children as well as the teacher and record their statements in field notes. Occasionally I will video tape small groups to help me analyze what I have written in these field notes. These video tapes will be viewed by me only and the tapes will be erased following my analysis. The video tapes will not be shown or used in another way.

Your child will be protected as all field notes will be coded using no names or other identifying data. There are no risks or immediate benefits to your child as a result of this study. You and/or your child are free to withdraw consent at any time without prejudice. No monetary compensation will be awarded for participation in this study. If you are interested in my results I will be willing to share them with you at your convenience.

I would sincerely appreciate your permission to observe your child's ESL Classroom and ask him/her questions relating to the writing he/she does there.

Sincerely,

Sharen Halsall  
College of Education  
Early Childhood Education  
392-0751

I have read and I understand the procedure described above. I agree to allow my child, \_\_\_\_\_, to participate in the procedures and I have received a copy of this description.

## SIGNATURES:

Parent/Guardian	Date	Witness	Date
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Relationship to Subject

I agree / do not agree (please circle one) to be interviewed at my convenience concerning my child's experience with writing.

APPENDIX D  
TEACHER'S INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_, consent to this  
(teacher)  
interview and the research has my permission to tape our  
conversation. I understand that I may stop the interview  
at any time and may skip questions I do not wish to  
answer. Further, my name or these data will not be used to  
identify me in any presentation or publication. The tape  
of our conversation will be erased following the data  
collection phase of the research.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX E  
SAMPLE FIELD NOTE PAGE

Protocol # 16

Date 3/30/84

Time 9:30-11:30

Class ESL

People T1, T2

Researcher S. Halsall

Page 1

- 1 New group reading a story and discussion, Millions of Cats.
- 2 Mrs. Summer: (Reading) But look said the very old man. And he pointed to a bunch of grass and in it sat one small thin cat. What is thin?
- 5 Jesús: Flaquito.
- 6 Mrs. Summer: Yes, very skinny--not fat at all.
- 7 I noticed a new student sitting in the group. He looked at me as if I were a stranger--big dark eyes
- 8 staring at me as I sat writing my notes.
- 9 Mrs. Summer: Oh, Sharen--tomorrow, Wednesday and Thursday we will have all the bilingual kids in the library because regular classes are having MAT tests.
- 11 Researcher: Oh, dear.
- 12 Mrs. Summer: And the following Tuesday, Wed., and Thursday we are having our own testing.
- 14 (Thought: That blows the next two weeks of data collection. Except Mondays and Fridays)
- 15 Researcher: I'll talk to you after group.

APPENDIX F  
STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Name/Country/Age

1. Tell me about ESL class or English class.
2. What do you do in English class?
3. What is your teacher's name?
4. Tell me what you like about coming to English class.
5. Tell me what you don't like about it.
6. Do you ever write? Where?
7. What do you have to do to be a good writer?
8. Do you like writing? What do you write about?
9. Do your parents write at home?
10. Do you have a place to write at home?
11. What types of things do you write?
12. Do you remember when you learned to write?
13. What's important about learning to write?
14. What's more important than learning to write?
15. Do you ever write letters to anyone? Who? Why?
16. Do you every write stories? Why? Why not?

APPENDIX G  
TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS  
(REGARDING MAILBOX DIALOG)

1. When did the children write their notes?
2. What were their composing behaviors?
3. When did they put them in their mailboxes?
4. Did they ask for help with words? Phrases?
5. Did you prompt them?
6. Did you encourage them to write letters, notes?  
How? How much?
7. Did your messages get longer? Shorter?
8. Did you write according to difficulty for younger or  
for older children?
9. Did the kindergarteners write?
10. Who was the most interested? Least?
11. Did you receive more than one note a day? Less than  
one?
12. Is there anything else you'd like to add about this  
writing activity?

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sharen W. Halsall was born and reared in Madera, California. In 1969, she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in anthropology and Spanish from the University of California, Los Angeles. After teaching for 2 years in Los Angeles City schools and attending classes at the university, she received a Master of Arts degree in special education in 1971.

Following the attainment of her master's degree, Ms. Halsall taught in Phoenix, Arizona, in an EMR classroom and in Fort Worth, Texas, in a learning disabilities classroom before moving to Central America. In Panama, she accepted a position in the American schools serving as an educational diagnostician for seven years. Although English is her first language, she became fluent in Spanish as a result of working within the dual language system of these schools. In 1980, Ms. Halsall returned to the United States to pursue a doctorate in early childhood education.

From 1982 to 1985, Ms. Halsall was a Title VII Bilingual Fellow at the University of Florida, a program administered by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs, U.S. Department of Education. She majored in curriculum and instruction with

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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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